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Lankan Prez's NPP gets two-thirds majority in Parl

The party also dominated Jaffna, which is a Tamil heartland

COLOMBO, 15 NOV

Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's National People's Power (NPP) on Friday swept the parliamentary elections by winning a two-thirds majority and also dominating the Jaffna electoral district – the heartland of the nation's Tamil minority.

The NPP coalition, which contested under the Malimawa (compass) symbol, secured 159 out of the 225 seats in the parliament, according to the latest results on the island nation's election commission website. The NPP received over 6.8 million or 61 per cent of the votes counted, taking a commanding lead over its rivals.

Sri Lanka's Samagi Jana Balawegaya headed by Sajith Premadasa was a distant second with 40 seats. Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi got eight seats, New Democratic Front got five and Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna and Sri Lanka Muslim Congress got three each.

Thursday's poll saw the lowest turnout since 2010. Dissanayake had announced the snap polls shortly after his election as president in September. The new parliament is now set to meet next week.

Anura Kumara Dissanayake had announced the snap polls after his election as President in September ***PHOTO: PTI***

The left-leaning president's alliance made history in the Jaffna electoral district as it trounced traditional Tamil nationalist parties in the cultural capital of the community. This is the first time that a predominantly Sinhala party from the country's south has notched this achievement. Previously, the United National Party had won a solitary seat in the district.

The NPP won more than 80,000 votes in the district, outperforming Ilankai Tamil Arasu Kachchi (ITAK), which got a little over 63,000 votes in the final count. Accordingly, three seats in the district went to Dissanayake's party. The ITAK, All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC), and Independent Group 17 won one seat each. The result in this northern district resonates with the new president's pre-election claim that his party has been accepted as a truly national party by all communities.

"The era of dividing and setting one community against the other has ended as people are embracing the NPP," he had said. *—PTI*

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JUST DAYS BEFORE POLLS

Fadnavis snubs Ajit for dissing 'batenge toh katenge'

MUMBAI, 15 NOV

In a pointed rebuke to NCP ally Ajit Pawar, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis on Friday backed the "Batenge toh katenge" slogan coined by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, stating that Pawar's understanding of the slogan was still influenced by his former allies.

The controversial slogan, which was first introduced by Adityanath during a rally in Maharashtra, has been backed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. However, the Opposition alleged that the slogan carries communal overtones.

Pawar, while criticising the slogan ahead of Assembly elections, stated there was no place for the "batenge toh katenge" slogan in Maharashtra, emphasising that the state follows the principles of BR Ambedkar. "I am not supporting it. I have said this several times. It will not work in Maharashtra. This may work in Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand," he said in a recent interview. In response, Fadnavis said, "For decades, Ajit stayed with ideologies that were secular and anti-Hindu. There is no secularism among those who call themselves secularists. He has stayed with people for whom opposing Hindutva is secularism. *—PTI*

Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar ***PHOTO: PTI***

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EC seizes cash, gold worth ₹536cr

Election Commission in Maharashtra received 6,382 complaints related to Model Code of Conduct violations in the past month and has resolved all but one, while agencies under it have seized cash and goods worth more than Rs 536 crore. These complaints were filed through the cVIGIL app of the poll panel between 15 October, when the MCC came into force, and 14 November, said the office of state Chief Electoral Officer in a statement on Thursday. Of the total complaints received in the past month, 6,381 have been resolved by the EC, said the statement. In another incident, Static Surveillance Team (SST) seized 19kg gold and 37kg silver, costing around Rs 19 crore, from a vehicle in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar on Friday.

Anti-vaccine activist RFK Jr is Health Secy

WASHINGTON DC, 15 NOV

United States President-elect Donald Trump has picked controversial politician and vaccine sceptic Robert F Kennedy Jr to be Secretary of Health and Human Services, a job he lobbied for when suspended his own election campaign and supported that of the Republican candidate. During the Covid-19 pandemic, Kennedy claimed the virus was engineered to attack Caucasians and Black people, sparing Chinese people and Ashkenazi Jews. He also talked about suffering health effects from a worm that got into his brain, ate part of it and died. "I am thrilled to announce Robert F Kennedy Jr as the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services [HHS]," Trump wrote on Thursday on his social media platform, Truth Social. Kennedy is a contentious but not surprising appointment.

—Courtesy, Al Jazeera

>>>More on Page 6

700kg drugs seized near Gujarat coast

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

The Anti-narcotics agencies have seized approximately 700 kilograms of Methamphetamine from Indian territorial waters off the Gujarat coast near Porbandar, resulting in the arrest of eight Iranian nationals. The street value of the confiscated drugs is estimated to be between Rs 2,500 and 3,500 crore in the international market, according to officials from the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).

The operation, dubbed 'Sagar Manthan-4', was initiated based on intelligence that indicated an unregistered vessel was navigating towards Indian waters, bearing drugs. The Indian Navy, in conjunction with the NCB and Gujarat Police Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS), intercepted the suspect vessel using maritime patrol assets. Upon boarding, authorities discovered the substantial drug consignment and detained the eight men, who reportedly lacked identity documentation.

This operation marks the second significant anti-narcotics effort at sea by the Navy this year. Union Home Minister Amit Shah praised the operation as a prime example of the government's commitment to combat drug trafficking, stating, "Pursuing PM Narendra Modi's vision for a drug-free Bharat, our agencies today thwarted an international drug trafficking cartel."

In total, over 3,500 kilograms of drugs have been intercepted through maritime routes this year, with various foreign nationals, including 11 Iranians and 14 Pakistanis, apprehended. *—PTI*

> **Pursuing Modi Ji's vision for a drug-free Bharat, our agencies today busted an international drug trafficking cartel**
> —Amit Shah, Union Home Minister

GURU NANAK JAYANTHI

Members of the Sikh community offer prayers at a Gurudwara in Bengaluru on Friday to celebrate Guru Nanak Jayanthi, marking his 555th birth anniversary ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

DELHI STARTS ALTERNATE TIMINGS FOR GOVT OFFICES

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

Delhi Chief Minister Atishi on Friday announced staggered timings for government offices in the city in a bid to tackle traffic congestion and reduce pollution levels in the national capital. Under the new schedule, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi offices will operate from 8.30am to 5.00pm, Central Government offices from 9.00am to 5.30pm and Delhi Government offices from 10.00am to 6.30pm, Atishi said in a post on X. She said the move aims to ease vehicular traffic during peak hours. The Commission for Air Quality Management has imposed GRAP III measures as the national capital recorded the worst pollution levels in the country, with the air quality remaining in "severe". *—PTI*

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PM, Rahul face chopper trouble amid rallies

RANCHi, 15 NOV

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was stranded in Jharkhand's Deoghar airport for nearly two hours on Friday after his special IAF aircraft developed a snag, flew back to Delhi in another plane, officials said. Modi visited Jamui, around 80 km from Deoghar, to attend a function marking the 150th birth anniversary of tribal leader Birsa Munda. While Modi waited for the issue to be resolved, the region's airspace was declared a "no-flying zone".

Simultaneously, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi also faced travel restrictions in Godda, where he had been addressing an election rally. His helicopter was grounded for nearly two hours due to the same airspace protocol affecting Modi, leading to delays and potential cancellations of his subsequent engagements. Congress alleged that these measures were an unjust attempt to undermine Gandhi's campaign efforts. Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh lodged a formal complaint to the Election Commission, asserting that the restrictions disrupted the level playing field essential for fair electoral competition.

He argued that such interference allows the ruling party to exploit protocol to disadvantage opposition leaders, highlighting the need for urgent intervention by electoral authorities. *—PTI*

PRIORITISE 'ABSOLUTELY BLINDED' OVER 'LOW VISION' IN JOBS: HC

BENGALURU, 15 NOV

In a landmark decision, the High Court has ruled that individuals with "absolute blindness" should receive preference over those with "low vision" in employment opportunities, provided their disability does not impede their ability to perform job responsibilities effectively. This judgement was delivered by a division bench comprising Justice Krishna S Dixit and Justice CM Joshi, as they dismissed an appeal from the Department of School Education challenging a previous ruling by the Karnataka State Administrative Tribunal (KSAT). The Department of School Education argued that candidates with "low vision" and those with "absolute blindness" should be classified into separate categories, a point the High Court bench found unconvincing. *—PTI*

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AFTER BCCI OBJECTION

ICC puts Pakistan's 'POK' CT Trophy tour on hold

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

In a significant development, the International Cricket Council (ICC) has put a hold on the Champions Trophy tour to disputed Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) following strong objections from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). The tournament, which last took place in 2017, is already facing uncertainty as the BCCI has refused to send its team to Pakistan for the event.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) had previously dismissed a proposed 'Hybrid Model' that would see India play its matches in Dubai. With the latest controversy surrounding the trophy tour, the tournament schedule is now in limbo, complicating matters further.

On Friday, BCCI Secretary Jay Shah contacted the ICC's top officials to express his condemnation of the PCB's decision to conduct a trophy tour in multiple cities within the disputed region. A senior BCCI official, who preferred to remain anonymous, revealed to PTI, "The BCCI secretary was extremely critical of the PCB's move and urged the ICC to take firm action. While there are no issues with activities in Islamabad, a CT tour to PoK is unacceptable."

The CT tour is part of ICC's promotional initiative and involves visits to various cities as agreed upon with the host nation. However, the PCB announced the tour to cities such as Skardu, Murree, Hunza, and Muzaffarabad, all located in the contentious area, without consulting other stakeholders.

An ICC board member labelled this move as inappropriate, hinting that the ICC is unlikely to sanction the tour to disputed regions. *—PTI*

An ICC board member labelled this move as inappropriate, hinting that the ICC is unlikely to sanction the tour to disputed regions ***PHOTO: ICC***

Prioritise 'absolute blindness' over 'low vision' in jobs: HC

It was argued that blindness quota should be a separate category

BENGALURU, 15 NOV

In a landmark decision, the High Court has ruled that individuals with "absolute blindness" should receive preference over those with "low vision" in employment opportunities, provided their disability does not impede their ability to perform job responsibilities effectively. This judgement was delivered by a division bench comprising Justice Krishna S Dixit and Justice CM Joshi, as they dismissed an appeal from the Department of School Education challenging a previous ruling by the Karnataka State Administrative Tribunal (KSAT).

The case centred on HN Latha, a blind candidate from the Scheduled Caste community in Periyapatna taluk, Mysuru district, who applied for the role of Kannada and social studies teacher at a government primary school in 2022. Despite her name being included in the selection list published on 8 March, 2023, her application was unjustly rejected on 4 July, 2023. Latha subsequently challenged this decision before the KSAT, which ruled in her favour, awarding her Rs 10,000 in costs and ordering a reconsideration of her application.

The court called for inclusive hiring practices PHOTO: PTI

The Department of School Education argued that candidates with "low vision" and those with "absolute blindness" should be classified into separate categories, a point the High Court bench found unconvincing.

The judges noted that despite concerns regarding the suitability of blind individuals handling subjects such as social studies, Latha met all educational qualifications.

The court called for inclusive hiring practices, underscoring the valuable traits inherent in blind individuals, including adaptability and resilience, as exemplified by notable historical figures who triumphed despite their blindness. —*PTI*

RS 50 CRORE CHARGE

HDK demands SIT probe over CM's bribery remarks

MYSURU, 15 NOV

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy on Friday demanded a Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe into Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's allegations that the BJP offered bribes of Rs 50 crore each to 50 Congress MLAs to destabilise his government in Karnataka. Kumaraswamy labelled the claims as irresponsible, urging Siddaramaiah to utilise his authority to investigate the bribery accusations. Siddaramaiah, speaking at an event in Mysuru, reiterated his statement, suggesting that the BJP was resorting to framing him in false cases, including the ongoing MUDA site allotment scam, amid their failed bribery attempts.

In a separate event, Kumaraswamy appealed to vulnerable tribals residing in forest fringes to prioritise education, advocating for higher education in professional fields such as medicine and engineering. He inaugurated the Janjati Gaurav Divas, honouring tribal freedom fighters and celebrating the legacy of tribal leader Birsa Munda.

Kumaraswamy highlighted the Union government's efforts to enhance tribal welfare through basic facilities and various schemes, promising to promote forest minor products produced by tribals in the international market.

Union Minister of State for Labour and Employment Shobha Karandlaje called for better coordination between state and union authorities to facilitate land identification for tribal housing, addressing delays impacting beneficiaries.

The event witnessed several tribal residents voicing their concerns to the ministers, who reassured their commitment to improving living conditions and promoting chemical-free agricultural practices among tribal communities. Noteworthy officials, including MLA TS Srivatsa and other local leaders, attended the event, emphasising the government's focus on empowering tribal communities

—*Salar News with Agencies*

CLASSIC CARS, TIMELESS CHARM

Vintage Car Rally was held in front of Vidhana Soudha, organised by the Federation of Historic Vehicles of India in association with Destination Rally, in Bengaluru on Friday. The rally was flagged off by Tourism Minister HK Patil PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

Govt transfers 7 IPS officers

G Sangeeta PHOTO: PTI

Shantanu Sinha PHOTO: PTI

BENGALURU, 15 NOV

- The state government on Friday issued an order, transferring seven IPS officers across the districts with immediate effect.

The state government on Friday issued an order, transferring seven IPS officers across the districts with immediate effect.

Shantanu Sinha, who was waiting for posting, has been appointed as the deputy inspector general of police in the criminal investigation department (CID). G Sangeeta, who was serving as the superintendent of police (SP) in Yadgir district, has been transferred to CID, replacing Prithvi Shankar who has been transferred as Yadgir SP.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Bengaluru City Crime Division) Abdul Ahad has been transferred as director of security and vigilance at Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation.

Laxman Nimbargi, serving as the SP of Bengaluru state crime records bureau (SCRB) has been posted as Vijayapura SP. Shivanshu Rajput, who is serving as SP at the centre for counter terrorism, Bengaluru, has been transferred as SP, SCRB. Chennabasavanna Langoti, deputy director of Karnataka Police Academy, Mysuru, has been promoted as its director following the retirement of Dr MB Boralinagaiah. —*Salar News*

Khan tried to assault Horatti, says HDK

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy on Friday said Housing and Waqf Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan tried to assault senior leader and Legislative Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti. Speaking to reporters after visiting Sri Chamundeshwari temple atop the Chamundi Hills, Kumaraswamy said He and Khan were neither close to each other, and they never addressed each other using nicknames. "I never addressed Zameer as Kulla (Dwarf), I swear before Goddess Chamundeshwari," he said. —*Salar News*

Cong using Covid-19 probe to attack BJP: Sudhakar

C'BALLAPURA, 15 NOV

DBJP MP K Sudhakar on Friday accused the Congress government of using the investigation into COVID-19 management during the BJP regime as a "political tool" against his party.

The Congress government, based on the recommendation of Justice John Michael D'Cunha, has initiated an investigation into alleged irregularities in Covid-19 management under the BJP's administration.

"Let them investigate. They have turned investigations into weapons against us. We are ready for any probe. We worked with conscience and saved lives during Covid-19, while Congress leaders stayed indoors," said Sudhakar.

The MP defended the previous BJP government's handling of the pandemic, highlighting the risks taken by officials and health department employees during the crisis. Sudhakar also criticised the Congress for altering the scope of the investigation, noting that the D'Cunha Commission had only submitted an interim report.

"The investigation is incomplete. Based on a preliminary inquiry report, a cabinet sub-committee led by Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar was formed. Within a month, they have also ordered the formation of a Special Investigation Team," he said.

"The Congress wants to portray BJP leaders as villains, but this will not benefit them. The wheel of time keeps turning, and we will see where they stand when it does," he remarked. —*PTI*

Two killed in City road accidents

BENGALURU, 15 NOV

As many as two individuals, including a woman, lost their lives in separate road accidents across the city.

In the first incident, a 59-year-old woman, Khuteeja Banu, was allegedly struck by an out-of-control private bus near the BHEL bus stop within the Byatarayanapura traffic police jurisdiction.

Reports indicate that Khuteeja had just returned from Channapatna with her husband after casting her vote in the ongoing bypolls. Around 1pm, while waiting for a bus to her home on Bannerghatta Road, she was knocked down by the bus, sustaining severe injuries that rendered her unconscious. She was subsequently rushed to Sanjay Gandhi Hospital, where she tragically succumbed to her injuries at approximately 2.15pm. The police have taken the bus driver into custody, and further investigations are underway.

In another incident, a 37-year-old labourer, Basavaraju, was killed when he fell asleep under a parked truck in Peenya. Seeking shelter from the rain near Balaji toll plaza, he inadvertently became a victim when the truck driver, unaware of his presence, started the vehicle and tragically ran over him. The Peenya traffic police have registered a case and sent Basavaraju's body to Sapthagiri Hospital for post-mortem. ——*Salar News*

MCC suspends staffer for drawing twin salaries

MYSURU, 15 NOV

Mysore City Corporation (MCC) has suspended one of its contract employees deputed to Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) after it came to light that he was drawing salary from both urban bodies. MCC Commissioner Ashad Ur Rehaman Sharief issued an order to this effect after a preliminary inquiry confirmed the irregularity.BK Kumar, the contract employee who is now facing legal action, hails from Bevinakuppe village of Pandavapura taluk. He is also accused of being involved in some irregularities in MUDA.—*Salar News*

Thief held with stolen jewellery worth ₹36 lakh

MYSURU, 15 NOV

Kuvempunagar Police have arrested a thief and recovered gold and silver ornaments worth Rs 36.12 lakh he had stolen from 33 houses. They have also confiscated a bike from him. Police identified the accused as Prasad alias Asif, a resident of Bengaluru. They have launched a manhunt for his accomplice Mohammed Munna. Kuvempunagar Police led by PSI Arunkumar PL arrested Prasad during a routine police patrolling. During interrogation, he admitted that he had stolen the gold ornaments from 33 houses. He also confessed that some of the thefts were committed in Naguvinahalli village of Srirangapatna taluk. Prasad is accused in multiple cases filed in different police stations, police said.Kuvempunagar Police conducted the investigation under the guidance of DCP Jahnavi VS and ACP R Rameshkumar of Krishnaraja limits. —*Salar News*

Horatti criticises increasing use of caste factors in electoral politics

MYSURU, 15 NOV

State Legislative Council Speaker Basavaraj Horatti expressed concern over the lack of participation by elected members in debates PHOTO: PTI

State Legislative Council Speaker Basavaraj Horatti on Friday expressed deep concern over the increasing use of money, muscle power, and caste factors in electoral politics, warning that these practices were leading to the degradation of political integrity in the country.

Horatti was speaking at a two-day seminar on the Historical Review of Mysuru Praja Prathinidhi Sabhe (People's Representative Assembly), a legislative body introduced during the princely state of Mysore in 1881. The event was being held at the college campus on Ooty Road in Mysuru.

The Legislative Council Speaker lamented that, in recent years, political parties have increasingly based their candidate selections on factors like the candidate's financial capacity to contest elections, caste, and other such considerations. "When candidates woo voters with money, freebies, and promises, the core values of principle-based politics are sidelined," Horatti remarked. "This shift undermines the ethical foundations of our democracy."

He also criticised the silence surrounding issues such as political funding and electoral malpractices, including the exchange of money between candidates and voters. These practices, he argued, threaten the very fabric of democracy in the country. Horatti urged students and youth to actively participate in politics rather than distancing themselves from the system due to corruption and malpractices. He also expressed concern over the lack of active participation by elected members in the legislative debates and proceedings.

He pointed out that both the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council are the highest decision-making bodies in a democratic federal setup, and yet, many elected representatives fail to engage meaningfully in discussions. ——*Salar News*

MONSOON FURY

Cars struggle to wade through the rising water as heavy rain floods Vatal Nagaraj Road, Okalipuram in Bengaluru, on Friday PHOTO: PTI

MULTI-STATE GANG BUSTED

Thieves use couriers to sell phones across states

BENGALURU, 15 NOV

A major mobile phone theft racket operating across multiple states was uncovered by Chandra Layout police on Friday. Two individuals were arrested for stealing mobile phones in Bengaluru and then sending them via courier to their associates in Kerala, where the phones were sold without detection.

The arrests followed a complaint by a manager of a local DTDC courier office. According to police, one of the accused had sent a package containing 12 mobile phones to an address in Kerala. However, when the recipient's address could not be located, the package was returned to the courier office in Chandra Layout. Suspicious of the situation, the courier manager attempted to contact the sender, only to find that the contact details provided were fake.

The police recovered 52 stolen phones, worth an estimated Rs 10.5 lakh, from the possession of the two suspects PHOTO: X

The manager promptly alerted the police, who opened the box and discovered the stolen phones. Using CCTV footage from the courier office, the police were able to identify the suspects, leading them to Bhadravathi in Shivamogga district.

Upon questioning, the arrested individuals admitted to being part of a larger mobile phone theft ring. They revealed that they had been stealing mobile phones from public places and shipping them to their contacts in Kerala through courier services. The stolen phones were then sold in other states to avoid detection by local authorities.

The police recovered 52 stolen phones, worth an estimated Rs 10.5 lakh, from the possession of the two suspects. A subsequent investigation led the police to a mobile phone shop in Konduparambil, Kerala, where another associate was arrested. Around 30 stolen phones were seized from the shop. —*Salar News*

4 held for luring students to open mule bank accounts

BENGALURU, 15 NOV

Four individuals were arrested by the Cyber Economics and Narcotics (CEN) South division in City for allegedly running a job fraud that targeted students, luring them into opening mule bank accounts to facilitate online scams. Speaking to reporters on Friday, City Police Commissioner B Dayananda confirmed that the arrests followed a complaint from a city resident who had lost Rs 12.43 lakh to online scammers promising significant profits in exchange for his deposit.

The accused were traced to Rajasthan, where they were arrested. The suspects—Aravind Kumar, 19, and Abhay Dhan, 19, from Jodhpur, and Pavan Bishnoi, 18, and Saway Singh from Jaisalmer—were taken into custody. After opening the account, the accused would collect the bank account passbook, cheque books and ATM cards along with the SIM cards used to open the accounts from the students.

19 mobile phones, two laptops, 20 SIM cards and details of multiple bank accounts were seized from the house of the accused. —*Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Prez leads nation in paying tributes to Birsa Munda

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

President Droupadi Murmu on Friday led the nation in paying tributes to tribal icon Birsa Munda on his birth anniversary which is observed as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas. President Murmu, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla offered floral tributes at the statue of Birsa Munda at the Prerna Sthal in the Parliament complex. Rajya Sabha Deputy Chair Harivansh was also present. After the event, the leaders interacted with folk artistes. After Murmu had left the venue, Dhankhar, who is also the Rajya Sabha chairperson, and Birla tried their hands on musical instruments, including drums. *—PTI*

R'than's Tonk's situation stable after violence: DM

JAIPUR, 15 NOV

The low and order situation has stabilised in Rajasthan's Tonk district, where a candidate in the recent bypolls was arrested on Thursday, escalating violence, the district collector said on Friday. On Wednesday, Congress rebel and Independent candidate Naresh Meena slapped Malpura SDM Amit Chaudhary outside a polling booth in front of hundreds of people. Tonk District Collector Soumya Jha said, "During polling on November 13, a candidate slapped the SDM while on election duty. The SDM filed an FIR." "After the polls ended and the polling party was leaving, the candidate tried to stop them. The police attempted to resolve the situation, but the candidate initiated an assault. Now the situation has stabilised and everything is under control," Jha added. *—PTI*

Kejri welcomes ex-Cong MLA Dhingan into AAP

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) chief Arvind Kejriwal on Friday inducted former Congress leader Veer Singh Dhingan into his party. The Dalit leader who has won three terms as an MLA from Seemapuri – a reserved constituency – on Congress tickets, is likely to contest for AAP in the upcoming elections. Kejriwal said Dhingan was an experienced leader and could be seen as the future MLA of Seemapuri constituency. He also asserted that his party will again form the government in Delhi after the Assembly polls due in February next year. The constituency was previously represented by Rajendra Pal Gautam, a former AAP minister, who quit the party and joined Congress in September. *—PTI*

Ex-Bareilly BJP minority cell chief booked for rape

BAREILLY, 15 NOV

Police have registered a rape case against six persons, including the former Bareilly city unit chief of the BJP Minority Morcha, Anees Ansari, officials said on Friday. The FIR was filed at Baradari police station on Thursday on a complaint by a 32-year-old woman, who also complained to the chief minister through a social media post. The development comes days after Ansari resigned from his position on November 8 following several audio clips purportedly containing "obscene conversations" between him and a woman went viral on social media. Ansari had submitted his resignation to the BJP city unit chief Adhir Saxena. On Friday, Senior Superintendent of Police Anurag Arya said, "The FIR names Anees Ansari, his son Shahnawaz, Javed alias Bablu, Javed Media, Faizal, and an unidentified individual." *—PTI*

Ajit denies Adani was at BJP-NCP meeting

In a U-turn, Ajit says the meeting was at Adani's guest house but the industrialist was absent

MUMBAI, 15 NOV

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar on Friday clarified on an earlier statement that industrialist Gautam Adani was present at the key discussions about government formation in the state involving top BJP and NCP leaders 5 years ago. Pawar said that he had made a mistake by stating this earlier.

"I said about that, sometimes we are so busy with our work, that, by mistake, I will say something..... it must have happened by mistake.," Pawar stated.

"I am a man, only a man makes mistakes," he added. "He (Gautam Adani) was not there. They were not there. meeting is held in different areas. Like we are sitting here. Some are i n Devgiri, some are in Sagar, some are in Varsha, some are in different hotels, some are in other places, in guest houses," Ajit Pawar said.

Ajit stated that the meeting was held in the industrialist's guest house and denied the role of any industrialist in the government formation.

"We were sitting in Gautam Adani's guest house. To form a government of a state, an industrialist has no role. He was not there." Pawar stated.

When asked if was he pressurised to give such a statement, he said that he does not come under pressure.

On Opposition's allegations against the NDA government of allocating all industries to Gujarat he said, "This is also a fake narrative. Everyone is going to Gujarat. Even today, the most investment of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is coming to Maharashtra. It is number one in the whole country," he added. *—PTI*

It is my responsibiity to make anyone who threatens you (Sena UBT workers) sleep on ice slab because we are forming the next government. (Ice slab refers to extrajudicial torture)

-Aaditya Thackeray, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader

MNS cancels its Shivaji Park rally

Mumbai, 15 Nov

Maharashtra Navnirman Sena president Raj Thackeray said on Friday that he won't hold his 17 November rally at Mumbai's Shivaji Park as the Election Commission (EC) is yet to grant his party permission for the event. Instead, Thackeray said, he would visit assembly segments in Mumbai and Thane to canvass for MNS candidates

Bollywood seeks new reforms for daily wagers

MUMBAI, 15 NOV

Ahead of Maharashtra assembly elections on 20 November, stakeholders in the Bollywood film industry are hopeful that the incoming government will implement critical reforms for daily wage workers and alleviate economic pressures on the sector. The elections will see a contest between the ruling Mahayuti coalition—comprising the BJP, Shiv Sena, and NCP—and the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi, led by Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT), and NCP (SP).

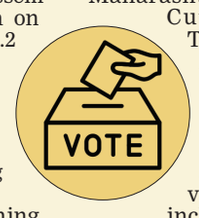
Veteran actor Suresh Oberoi urged citizens to exercise their voting rights, calling the act a "national festival". Actor Gulshan Devaiah echoed his sentiment, praising the democratic process, while producer Boney Kapoor stressed the importance of votes in shaping a democratic government. Filmmaker Subhash Ghai, who remains apolitical, emphasised the need for a leader focused on Maharashtra's development.

Concerns about support for daily wage workers became more pronounced post-Covid-19, with BN Tiwari, president of the Federation of Western India Cine Employees, highlighting the lack of government assistance and job stability for these workers. The deteriorating state of Film City was also criticised—Tiwari drawing comparisons to the well-maintained Ramoji Film City in Hyderabad. *—PTI*

1.2 MILLION SUGARCANE CUTTERS TO MISS VOTING

PUNE, 15 NOV

As the Maharashtra assembly elections approach on 20 November, over 1.2 million sugarcane cutters from Marathwada, northern Maharashtra, and Vidarbha face the prospect of missing their chance to vote.



With the cane crushing season beginning on 15 November, many workers have already migrated to sugarcane-producing areas in western Maharashtra and other states. The Maharashtra Sugarcane Cutters and Transport Association has petitioned the Aurangabad High Court for measures to safeguard their voting rights, including arrangements for transportation and postal ballots.

Meanwhile, the West Indian Sugar Mills Association has promised to facilitate the workers' return to their hometowns for voting, emphasizing the importance of these migrant workers' participation in the electoral process. *—PTI*

- With the cane crushing season beginnning on 15 November many have already migrated to sugarcane-producing areas, other states

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Friday that election officials at Maharashtra's Hingoli checked the helicopter ferrying him and his bags. On X, Shah said the BJP believes in free and fair elections and follows all laid-down rules and protocols. This comes as Opposition leaders complain of their bags being checked amid elections **PHOTO: X/@AMITSHAH**

Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren during an election rally ahead of the second phase of state Assembly elections in Jamtara district on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

BJP using money from paper leaks to fund polls: Soren

RANCHI, 15 NOV

Taking a dig at the central investigative agencies, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Friday claimed that they were busy probing incidents like "chicken theft" while cases like the examination paper leaks in UP remain untouched at the behest of BJP.

Soren alleged that BJP was behind the paper leaks in the states it ruled, and the money it garnered from there was being used to fund its poll campaigns.

"The pomp and show that you are seeing from BJP in Jharkhand elections is all due to the money from paper leaks... ED, CBI, NIA which have started investigating even chicken theft cases these days did not probe paper leaks because it is the BJP that leaks these and with that money, it buys MLAs and MPs post elections," Soren alleged in a post on X.

"Exam papers were leaked in all BJP-ruled states... MP Vyapam scam claimed several lives. In Jharkhand, we made tough law post one paper leak but BJP went to Raj Bhavan terming it a black law," he alleged.

On the occasion of Jharkhand Foundation Day Soren took to X and wrote, "Today, on the foundation day of our great state Jharkhand, this message was to be published in the leading newspapers of the country in honour of the brave martyrs of Jharkhand, but the BJP did not allow this to happen." *—PTI*

PM unveils ₹6,640 crore projects in Bihar

JAMUI, 15 NOV

Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled development projects worth Rs 6,640 crore from Bihar's Jamui district on Friday.

Modi was in the district to attend a function organised on the 150th birth anniversary of Birsa Munda, which is celebrated as 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas'.

He unveiled a commemorative coin and postal stamp in honour of Munda. He also virtually participated in the 'Grih Pravesh' of 11,000 houses built for tribal families under the PM Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN).

The projects unveiled by the PM were focused on improving infrastructure, healthcare, education, and livelihood generation in tribal regions, according to an official statement.

Narendra Modi **PHOTO: PTI**

He launched 23 mobile medical units (MMUs) under PM-JANMAN, and 30 additional MMUs under Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJGUA) to enhance healthcare accessibility in remote tribal areas.

The PM laid the foundation stones for 500 km of new roads and 100 multi-purpose centres that would serve as community hubs in tribal areas.

Modi criticised previous Congress-led governments for failing to recognise the contributions of tribal communities in India's freedom movement.

Without naming the Congress or any individual, Modi remarked, "The attempt was to give all the credit to just one party and one family."

He emphasised that India's tribal community had not received the recognition it deserved under previous regimes. *—PTI*

- **There were empty chairs everywhere at Shivaji Park. This proves that he (the prime minister) lies so much, and people don't want to listen**

-Ramesh Chennithala, Congress leader

Buch row shows conflict of interest: RaGa

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

Stepping up his attack on SEBI Chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday alleged that India's economic framework is being hollowed out from within by a "cartel of corporate giants", enabled by those meant to guard the country's interests.

The former Congress chief said "the Madhubi Buch scandal" isn't just insider trading but is a revealing case of direct conflict of interest, where powerful regulators are entangled with the very corporations they're supposed to oversee.

Gandhi made the remarks in his post that accompanied a YouTube video, part of a series featuring him and Congress' media and publicity head Pawan Khera, in which the two leaders discuss various conflicts of interest allegations against Buch.

There was no immediate reaction from Buch, who is facing conflict of interest allegations, on the video and the charges. In his post Gandhi said, "India's economic framework is being hollowed out from within by a cartel of corporate giants, enabled by those meant to guard the country's interests." Congress and the Opposition has been targeting the government over conflict-of-interest allegations against Buch and demanding that she be removed from the post immediately. *—PTI*

LoP in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi addresses a meeting ahead of the Jharkhand Assembly polls, in Godda, on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

MANY KILLED, OTHERS MISSING

Protests erupt in Manipur over Jiribam row

CHURACHANDPUR, 15 NOV

Hundreds of people hit the streets in Manipur's Churachandpur district on Friday, demanding justice for those killed in a gunfight with the security forces in Jiribam.

The rally, organised by the Kuki Women Organisation for Human Rights, began at the Koite Playground around 11am.

With placards denouncing the CRPF, hundreds of people from different walks of life marched to the 'Wall of Remembrance', a memorial for the Kuki people killed in the ethnic violence in the state since May last year.

Ten suspected militants were killed in the gunfight with security forces after insurgents attacked the Borobekra police station in Jiribam district on Monday, according to police. However, a senior state government official had put the toll at 11. Kuki Students' Organisation vice president Minlal Gangte demanded a judicial inquiry into the incident. At the end of the rally, a memorandum addressed to the National Human Rights Commission and Union Home Minister Amit Shah was submitted to Additional Deputy Commissioner Seiminthang.

200 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic clashes between Imphal Valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kuki-Zo groups since May last year. Ethnically diverse Jiribam, which was largely untouched by the clashes witnessed violence after the mutilated body of a farmer was found in a field in June this year. *—PTI*

A memorandum addressed to the National Human Rights Commission and Home Minister Amit Shah was submitted at the end of rally **PHOTO: SCREENGRAB**

Stalin lays base for ₹1,000 cr Vietnamese shoe factory

ARIYALUR, 15 NOV

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin on Friday laid the foundation stone for a new manufacturing unit of the Taiwanese company Dean Shoes at the SIPCOT industrial park in Jayankondam.

The footwear major Long Yin Investment (Dean Shoes) will invest Rs 1,000 crore for the project in the industrially backward district and generate employment for 15,000 people.

This investment would further establish Tamil Nadu as a global hub for non-leather footwear manufacturing and would transform more districts like Perambalur, Ranipet and Ariyalur, driving distributed growth across the state, Industries Minister TRB Rajaa said.

MK Stalin **PHOTO: PTI**

"More importantly, 90 per cent of these jobs are for women, a key pillar of the Dravidian Model," the minister claimed.

"With global brands like Nike, Crocs, New Balance, Adidas, Puma and many more now being Made In Tamil Nadu, we are a top global footwear hub," Rajaa said in a post on the social media platform X. *—PTI*

UNESCO deems 24 Odisha villages as 'Tsunami Ready'

BHUBANESWAR, 15 NOV

The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the UNESCO on Friday awarded its "Tsunami Ready" recognition to 24 coastal villages in Odisha. It also renewed the Tsunami Ready Recognition Certificates of another two villages in the state. The declaration was made at the 2nd Global Tsunami Symposium held in Indonesia on 11 November. While the new "Tsunami Ready" villages are in Balasore, Bhadrak, Kendrapada, Jagatsinghpur, Puri and Ganjam districts, the villages whose certificates were renewed are Noliasahi in Jagatsinghpur district and Venkatraipur in Ganjam. Activities including training of stakeholders, awareness programmes, preparation of tsunami management plans and identification of evacuation routes, were done in the 24 tsunami-prone villages, the statement said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Cocaine valued at Rs 42 cr seized in Bihar

PATNA, 15 NOV

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) on Friday said it has busted a major drug racket with the arrest of one person in Bihar, with 4.2 kg of cocaine, which could have fetched Rs 42 crore in the contraband market.A DRI official said the agency had received a tip-off that a person, who had smuggled the narcotic substance into India from Thailand via Bhutan, was in Bihar. He was arrested in the north Bihar town of Muzaffarpur on Wednesday. "A white powdery substance" was recovered from his bag, the official said."A sample test conducted by the DRI officers confirmed that it was cocaine," said the official, adding that the accused revealed he was on his way to Delhi. *—PTI*

4 booked for kidnapping and thrashing bizman

THANE, 15 NOV

Maharashtra Police on Friday registered a case against four persons, including a woman, for allegedly kidnapping a businessman in Bhiwandi taluka of Maharashtra's Thane district by posing as cops and extorting Rs 40,000 from him, an official said. The incident occurred early on Wednesday, he said. In his complaint, the 20-year-old victim said the accused intercepted his car posing as police personnel and accused him of transporting beef in his car, he said. "The accused forced him into their vehicle. They thrashed him, demanded Rs 1 lakh from him and threatened to kill him if he failed to make the payment. They then forced him to pay Rs 40,000 online," Bharat Kamat, senior inspector at Narpoli police station. *—PTI*

MP deputy collector accused of rape

RAJGARH, 15 NOV

Police have registered a case against a deputy collector from Bhopal after a woman government employee accused him of repeatedly raping her on the pretext of marrying her, an official said on Friday. The accused, Rajesh Sorte, 47, started relationship with the complainant when he was the tehsildar in Pachore of Rajgarh district in 2022. Since then, he allegedly sexually assaulted her at different locations, the official said, quoting the woman's complaint. The Pachore police on Thursday booked Sorte for rape under the Indian Penal Code since the alleged crime was committed in 2022, before the implementation of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), said Sarangpur Sub Divisional Officer of Police Arvind Singh. He said the complainant had shared a video to back her claim. *—PTI*

Consensual sex with minor wife is rape: HC

Court upholds 24-year-old man's 10-year sentence

MUMBAI, 15 NOV

Consensual sexual intercourse with a wife who is below 18 years of age constitutes the offence of rape, the Bombay High Court said while upholding the conviction of a man sentenced to 10 years for the crime.

The Nagpur bench of Justice GA Sanap, in an order passed on 12 November, dismissed the 24-year-old man's appeal challenging the 2021 judgment of a sessions court holding him guilty under the provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and the Indian Penal Code for sexually assaulting his underage wife.

The man, who was sentenced to 10 years in jail by the sessions court, claimed that since the victim was his wife, their sexual relationship cannot be termed as rape. The high court, however, said the defence of consensual sex with the wife cannot be taken when the age of the wife is below 18 years.

"Sexual intercourse with a girl below 18 years of age is rape, regardless of whether she is married or not. The non-consensual intercourse with a wife, who is below 18 years of age, is rape," the bench held.

The woman, in her complaint lodged in 2019, said she was in a relationship with the man and that, despite her refusal, he raped and impregnated her. The duo then lived together and got married. However, the man insisted on an abortion.

She alleged that the man made a farce of the marriage and repeatedly raped and physically assaulted her.

The court noted that the woman gave birth to a baby boy, and as per the DNA analysis, the accused and she were the biological parents.

It also noted that as per documentary evidence, the complainant was born in 2002 and was a minor in 2019 when the alleged incident occurred. *—PTI*

The court noted that the woman gave birth to a baby boy, and as per the DNA analysis, the accused and she were the biological parents. ***PHOTO: PTI***

HC refuses to lift $7M fine on GAIL

Delhi High Court refused to interfere with an arbitral award, which directed GAIL to pay over USD 7M to Jindal Saw Ltd. On 29 October, the bench dismissed GAIL's appeal against a single judge's decision upholding the award. The dispute in the matter pertained to delayed delivery of pipes by SAW Pipes Ltd, now Jindal Saw Ltd, to Gas Authority of India Ltd (GAIL). The Arbitral Tribunal, passed in December 2002 and then amended in March 2003, had held that GAIL was responsible for the delay.

According to Sameer App, the Air Quality Index at 9 am was recorded in the 'severe' category (400 to 500), with a reading of 411 ***PHOTO: ANI***

Delhi: GRAP-3 curbs on amid 411 AQI

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

Delhi woke up to GRAP Stage III restrictions on Friday, as the city's air quality remained in the "severe" category for the third consecutive day, prompting strict measures to curb pollution levels.

According to Sameer App, the Air Quality Index at 9 am was recorded in the 'severe' category (400 to 500), with a reading of 411. The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) imposed GRAP Stage III as the national capital recorded the worst pollution levels in the country, with the air quality remaining in the "severe" category for two consecutive days. Prior to this, Delhi's air quality had been in the "very poor" range for 14 consecutive days.

The CAQM directed the authorities in Delhi-NCR to invoke curbs under stage III of the anti-pollution plan with immediate effect.

Curbs under Stage III include a ban on non-essential construction and demolition, closure of stone crushers and mining activities in Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR).

Environment Minister Gopal Rai said an additional 106 cluster buses would ply in the city while metro trains would make 60 extra trips. Under the Stage-IV restrictions of GRAP, all inter-state buses from NCR states – except electric vehicles, CNG vehicles and BS-VI diesel buses – will be prohibited from entering Delhi, alongside a stringent ban on construction and demolition activities and suspension of mining-related activities. *—PTI*

RAIDS ON LOTTERY KING

ED on Friday seized Rs 8.8 crore in cash from the corporate office of Chennai-based 'lottery king' Santiago Martin. Martin was the single biggest donor to parties with over Rs 1,300 crore in electoral bonds. Officials said 20 premises linked to Martin and his son-in-law Aadhav Arjun in Chennai and Coimbatore Faridabad, Ludhiana and Kolkata in West Bengal were searched ***PHOTO: PTI***

Centre reforming entrance exam system: Pradhan

HYDERABAD, 15 NOV

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Friday said a high-powered committee appointed by the Centre under the leadership of former ISRO chief K Radhakrishnan to streamline the entrance examination system has recommended the restructuring of the National Testing Agency (NTA).

Recalling that the government had faced serious challenges in the conduct of the entrance exam last year, he said, "They (the committee) have suggested a lot of multidimensional reform, restructuring of NTA, new approach for the entrance process, looking into the mental health condition of the appearing students..."

The minister was speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an event at the Indian School of Business (ISB) in the state capital. Pradhan said he has appealed to the secretaries of all state governments to be partners in the reform process.

Dharmendra Pradhan ***PHOTO: ANI***

Many states conduct their own entrance examinations. There should be a collective effort to go into the expectations and aspirations of youth when they appear for any kind of exams, he said.

Noting that the Centre last year came out with a new legislation to prevent malpractices in examinations, he said stern action will be taken against those involved in unfair practices. *—PTI*

TRANSGENDERS TO MANAGE TRAFFIC IN HYDERABAD

HYDERABAD, 15 NOV

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has asked officials to appoint transgender persons as traffic volunteers at high-traffic areas in the city.

Reddy, who held a meeting with officials, said the services of transgenders should be utilised like home guards at traffic signals to prevent violations, an official release said late on Thursday. He also suggested deployment of transgender people during 'drunk and drive' checks. The officials have been asked to finalise a special dress code for transgenders. *—PTI*

WB cop among many injured as locals clash over train diversion

KOLKATA, 15 NOV

A police officer and several others were injured during a clash between commuters and police at Ashoknagar station in Eastern Railway's Dumdum Cantonment-Machhalandapur section on Friday.

Trouble started around 8.14am when commuters learned that the Bongaon-Majerhat local train would terminate at Tala station, located in the northern part of the city, rather than the scheduled Majerhat station.

The change in route was part of operational adjustments made in anticipation of a large gathering for the Ganga Arti show at Babu Ghat, a part of the Deva Deepavali Utsav. Irked, commuters blocked the tracks at Ashoknagar station, halting train movement.

Railway officials and police arrived at the scene and urged the protesters to lift the blockade and restore normal operations.

However, tension escalated when a section of the crowd turned violent and pelted stones at police officers. An assistant sub-inspector and several others were injured in the attack, police said.

The situation was eventually brought under control and train services were restored at 9.33am.

Eastern Railway said operational changes, including the short-termination and diversion of Circular Railway services, were made in consultation with the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Port Division, Kolkata, in view of the expected influx of devotees for the Ganga Arti event. *—PTI*

Railway officials and police arrived at the scene and urged the protesters to lift the blockade ***PHOTO: xxx***

Indians protest against Oxford's Kashmir debate

LONDON, 15 NOV

A group of Indian students chanted slogans and displayed placards at the University of Oxford to protest against a debate on Kashmir at the Oxford Union Society, which they said had offered a platform to speakers with alleged terrorism links.

'This House Believes in an Independent State of Kashmir' at the historic Oxford University institution on Thursday evening included Zafar Khan, connected to the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), and Muzzammil Ayub Thakur, associated with World Kashmir Freedom Movement, speaking in favour of the motion.

In March this year, India extended for another five years a ban on JKLF, led by imprisoned terror accused Yasin Malik.

Meanwhile, chants of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' and 'Oxford Union stands with terrorism' could be heard during the protests. *—PTI*

BABA MURDER

'Shooter stayed at scene for 20 min'

MUMBAI, 15 NOV

Shivkumar Gautam, the alleged main shooter in the Baba Siddique murder, changed his clothes, returned to the spot and stayed there for 20 minutes after the NCP leader was gunned down on 12 October, an official said on Thursday.

"He had thrown a bag carrying his shirt, pistol and his Aadhaar card at the spot. After the shooting, he found people were in panic and a large number of policemen had arrived. He also observed police were asking bystanders for leads on the perpetrators," the official said.

He saw that two of his associates had been nabbed from the spot itself, the official added.

"Gautam took an autorickshaw and went near Lilavati hospital, where Siddique was admitted, to confirm that the victim has died. At 10.47pm, he left for Kurla railway station. While on the train, he threw his mobile phone somewhere. Efforts are on to trace it," the official said.

It was found that wanted accused Shubham Lonkar was in direct contact with Anmol Bishnoi, brother of the jailed gangster Lawrence Bishnoi. Lonkar had trained with an AK-47 rifle in the dense forests near Chhattisgarh's Bilaspur in July. *—PTI*

Shivkumar Gautam ***PHOTO: PTI***

WB cops net 'molester' musician in Mumbai

KOLKATA, 15 NOV

Ending a cat-and-mouse chase lasting nearly two months, Kolkata Police have arrested from Mumbai a musician for allegedly molesting a student at his institute in Kolkata, a police officer said on Friday.

Singer and composer Sanjay Chakraborty, brother of Pandit Ajoy Chakraborty, was arrested by a Charu Market police team, the officer said.

Chakraborty has been booked under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and sent to police custody till 18 November. The incident took place in June when the singer allegedly molested a 15-year-old girl student at the yoga institute where he conducted singing classes.

"As per the complaint, Chakraborty stayed back after the class and after all other students left, allegedly molested the girl," the officer said.

It came to light after the victim was taken to Bengaluru by her parents for psychological treatment, the officer added. "During her treatment, the victim divulged the incident to her doctor," he added. The parents mailed their complaint to Belgharia police station in North 24 Parganas district in September, prompting the police to lodge a Zero FIR. *—PTI*

Sanjay Chakraborty ***PHOTO: FB***

IN CHHATTISGARH'S NARAYANPUR

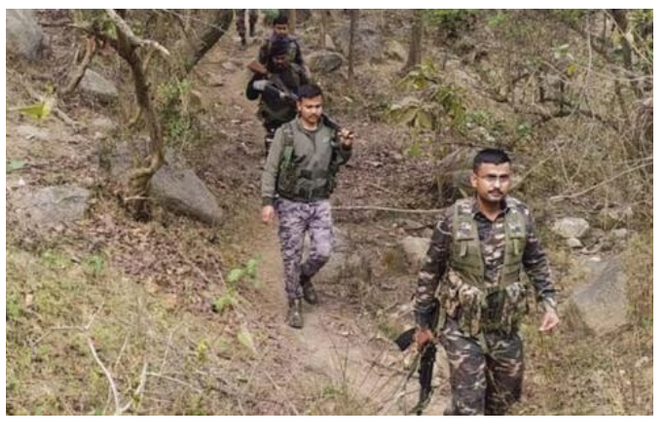
Naxal terror: Villagers return home after 21 yrs

RAIPUR, 15 NOV

More than two decades after deserting their village for fear of Maoists, around 25 tribal families are planning to return to their native place in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district.

Nearly 100 members of these families had left their homes at Gaarpa village in Abujhmad after Maoists started targeting them in 2003. They then settled on the outskirts of Narayanpur town on a tract of government land, where they took up agriculture for livelihood.

Now, 21 years after their desertion, these families recently visited their native place and have been planning to resettle there after police set up a camp to facilitate development works and ensure security for local population.

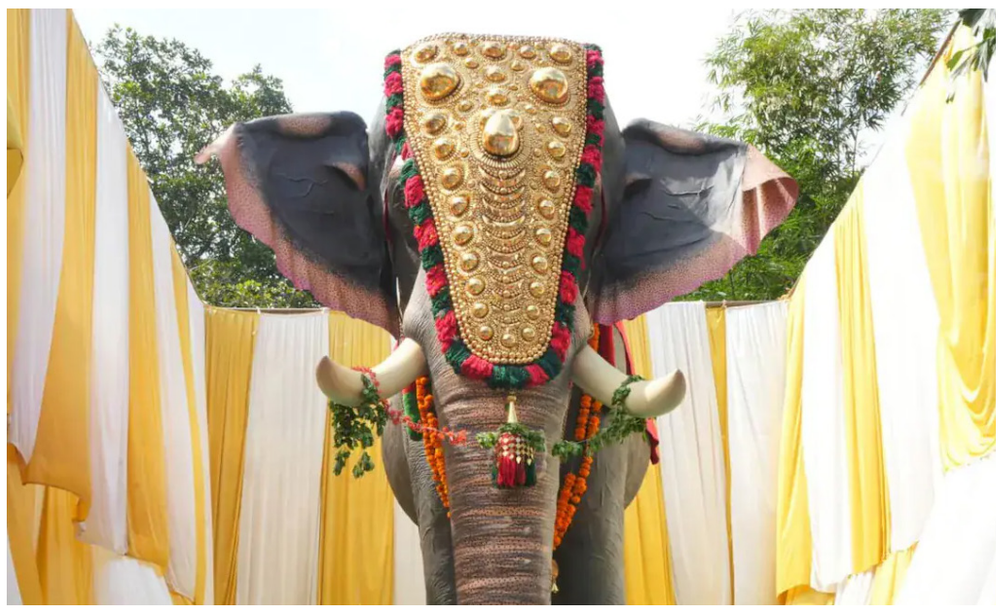


Nearly 100 members of tribal families had left their homes at Gaarpa village in Abujhmad after Maoists started targeting them in 2003 ***PHOTO: PTI***

Abujhmad, bordering Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district, was considered a Maoist fortress until recently. On 4 October, security forces scripted their most successful anti-insurgency operation in Chhattisgarh by gunning down 31 Naxalites during an encounter in the area.

"Leaving the ancestral land was never easy. We had no option but to flee for the sake of our lives." Said 60-year-old Sukkuram Nureti. His family was among the 25 that left Gaarpa in April 2003. "Of the 80 families in the village, around 25 were followers of 'Gayatri Pariwar' and Naxalites objected to it. They threatened us with dire consequences if we did not quit following 'Gayatri Pariwar'. So we decided to leave the village," he said.

Nureti said they always wanted to return. "Now it seems our dream will come true as a police camp has been set up and things have started improving there," said Nureti, who has served as a member of Janpad panchayat in the past. *—PTI*



TOKEN OF GRATITUDE

The non profit organisation People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India along with actor Vedhika gifted a life-size mechanical elephant to the Edayar Sree Vadakkumbad Shiva Vishnu Temple, Kannur in Kerala. PETA, in a statement, said that the mechanical elephant, named 'Vadakkumbad Sankaranarayanan', was donated to the temple in recognition of its decision never to own or hire live elephants
PHOTO: PETAINDIA

Demand for jobs in focus amid Shivaji statue outcry

Built at a cost of Rs 23.6 crore, the 35-foot statue of Shivaji collapsed on 26 August amid heavy monsoon rains. It was unveiled by PM Narendra Modi at Rajkot fort in Sindhudurg district on 4 December, 2023 ***PHOTO: PTI***

A white tarpaulin covers a structure on the ground at the red stone Rajkot fort in Malvan town of Sindhudurg district. Beneath the sheet is the statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji that collapsed in August, triggering protests across Maharashtra and a political firestorm.

In the poll-bound state, the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) has latched onto the incident, alleging corruption in the construction of the statue. Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray has promised Shivaji's temples across the state if MVA is voted to power.

The BJP-led Mahayuti government quickly moved to control the damage and announced plans to construct a larger structure at the same location. Locals said there is obvious anger and pain over the statue collapse in the coastal Malvan as the area draws its identity from the legendary Maratha king, but there are more pressing issues – employment opportunities and poor health infrastructure.

"As a Shiv permi (followers of Shivaji), we are no doubt dismayed and this may have some impact on the 20 November Assembly elections here," said Kalpita Joshi, who owns a stationery shop in Malvan, located about 500km from Mumbai.

She was among the residents who had participated in a protest after the statue collapsed. The protest turned violent when Sena (UBT) workers and supporters of BJP MP Narayan Rane, who wields considerable influence in the Konkan region including Malvan, clashed.

"How can the statue installed in December (2023) collapse in eight months? Those involved in any irregularities in its construction should be punished," she demanded.

But her bigger concern is the lack of employment opportunities for local youth and the lack of better health facilities. With tourism and fishing operating only six months a year, jobs are scarce in this scenic area.

The town has been known for the famous Sindhudurg sea fort built by Shivaji. Notably, the Malvani dialect and cuisine also come from this region of south Konkan. The area is also known for its cashew production and Alphonso mangoes.

The Rajkot fort is a new addition to Malvan's tourism landscape. Earlier, not many knew about it and the place was used for miscellaneous work, said a local.

Tourism and fishing drive Malvan's economy. Tourists flock to the town in large numbers each day to take a boat to reach the island Sindhudurg fort. Plus, water sports, pristine beaches and corals attract visitors to this town.

In December last year, Modi unveiled the statue of Shivaji at the Rajkot fort on Navy Day. This also brought in a lot of funds for the town's beautification. Roads got a new layer of tar and infrastructure work followed. However, their happiness and excitement were short-lived as the statue collapsed after about eight months. Gurunath Rane, who runs a restaurant here, said the new fort can be accessed throughout the year, unlike the Sindhudurg fort which remains out of bounds for tourists for nearly six months due to monsoon.

"The (Rajkot) fort was in a dilapidated condition where fortifications were damaged. But the state government rebuilt the fort before (last year's) Navy Day," said Rane, the president of Kille Sindhudurg Prernotsav Samitee that works for the restoration of the main Sindhudurg fort.

After the fort was rebuilt and the warrior king's statue installed, locals started selling roasted corn and instant noodles and set up beverage stalls outside the tourist spot, a sign of direct employment.

Balu Bhogvekar, a fisherman who catches crabs from the sea along the Rajkot fort, said nobody can be angry with what happened.

"Whatever happened has happened. When you build the statue hastily, it will collapse but the government should now install the new statue at the earliest. People are aware that politics is played over the incident. It is unlikely to be a poll issue. It is the local factors that will take precedence here," Bhogvekar said.

Naik said that Chhatrapati Shivaji is a symbol of self-respect for the people here, and while his party does not want to politicise the issue, those involved in corruption must be punished. His opponent Nilesh Rane said those responsible for the statue collapse must be brought to book. However, he also claimed that there could be a conspiracy, with months of planning, to bring down the statue. "When the statue collapsed, Naik reached the spot in 15 minutes which is suspicious," said Nilesh. *—PTI*

SALAR ساہر

'India's policies stop women from being climate leaders'

Despite progress in gender-focused policies, India's climate response remains fragmented, and its national climate policy still lacks a consolidated, gender-responsive climate finance strategy that could more comprehensively support women as climate leaders, according to a new report.

The report by research and public policy consulting firm Chase India, supported by Global Counsel, underscores this gap, calling for coordinated, gender-responsive climate finance frameworks to position women as central agents of climate resilience rather than passive beneficiaries.

Programmes like the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, which has provided over 103 million rural women with access to clean cooking fuel, and the National Rural Livelihoods Mission, which has mobilised millions of women in sustainable livelihoods, demonstrate India's commitment to gender-responsive policies.

However, these achievements are often constrained by limited coordination, reducing the overall impact of women-focused climate efforts.

"Despite these efforts, the impact of such policies often remains fragmented due to various ministries working in silos, and India's national climate policy still lacks a consolidated, gender-responsive climate finance strategy that could more comprehensively support women as climate leaders," the report said.

A clear example of this disconnect is the draft National Policy for Women 2016, which independently aims to prioritise addressing gender concerns during distress migration and displacement in times of natural calamities due to climate change and environmental degradation, it said.

While independent initiatives focused on enhancing rural women's access to micro-financing and sustainable livelihoods reflect India's commitment to empowering women as key actors in sustainable development, without dedicated, large-scale investments specifically targeting women's role in climate resilience and green technology, progress remains incremental.

For instance, there are various Missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) which enable employment opportunities for women, however, there are few climate finance mechanisms which include targeted funding to bolster female-led green initiatives or support women entrepreneurs in climate-sensitive sectors.

A critical advantage within the Indian regulatory framework is the quasi-federal structure, which provides an opportunity for targeted considerations to be built into independent State Action Plans for Climate Change, which devolve from NAPCC.

To bridge these gaps, the report offered recommendations specifically tailored for India.

It advocates for creating dedicated climate finance funds exclusively for women-led initiatives in climate-sensitive sectors, supporting female entrepreneurs in green and low-carbon projects.

Additionally, it suggests implementing targeted financial literacy programmes at the grassroots level to connect rural women with the resources they need to participate in climate adaptation actively, equipping them with the tools to contribute to resilience efforts in their communities.

The report highlighted that woman in India—constituting nearly half of the population and playing crucial roles in resource management—face systemic financial barriers that limit their capacity to adapt to climate impacts.

The report's recommendations include conducting gender assessments during climate policy planning stages, enabling a clear understanding of women's needs and designing policies that prioritize support for their roles in adaptation and resilience.

Another recommendation focuses on offering fiscal incentives to organizations adopting gender-inclusive practices, such as tax credits for companies with gender-focused sustainability initiatives.

Climate impacts, from droughts to floods, disproportionately affect women, who often lack the financial means and literacy needed to access adaptation resources.

The report argues that by integrating women into climate finance frameworks, South Asia could unlock significant socio-economic benefits, positioning women not only as participants but as leaders in climate resilience.

The report outlines a two-pronged approach of Price and Policy to create a gender-responsive financial system. As the largest and most diverse country in South Asia, India is uniquely positioned to lead the region's shift toward gender-responsive climate finance. *—PTI*

Climate impacts, from droughts to floods, disproportionately affect women, who often lack the financial means and literacy needed to access adaptation resources ***PHOTO: UNFPA***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Trump to resume India ties from where he left off, says his ex admin official

US president-elect Donald Trump, who enjoys very good relationship with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is expected to build on the progress made during his first term and continue strengthening ties with India, his South Asia point-person at the White House during his first term has said.

Speaking to PTI in an interview, Lisa Curtis, who served as deputy assistant to president Trump and as National Security Council senior director for South and Central Asia from 2017 to 2021, also said she expected the same bumps for India and the US, as in Trump's first term, including tariff, dependence on Russia over arms supply and oil purchase from Iran.

"I think that President (elect) Trump will pick up where he left off with India. He clearly has good feelings, goodwill toward India, and I really see this as an opportunity to just continue building the relationship and really solidifying that partnership," Curtis said.

During Trump's first term (2017-2021), there was an "elevation of the US-India relationship" because of the importance of India and its role in dealing with challenges from China, she said.

Curtis pointed out that there was also a notable mutual respect and personal connection between Trump and Prime Minister Modi.

"We could see that during the event when Prime Minister Modi addressed 50,000 Americans at the Astrodome in Houston. We saw that when President Trump addressed 100,000 Indians in a stadium in Ahmedabad. That relationship really helped cement a lot of the progress that was made," said Curtis, who is currently a Senior Fellow and Director of the Indo-Pacific Security Program at Center for a New American Security, a think-tank.

"Technology controls were lifted on India. India gained access to armed drone technology. Now it's buying 31 Sea Guardian predators. We saw the building up of not only the defence and security relationship, but also confidence and trust," she said, adding that the Quad was started during that period.

At the same time, there were a couple of bumps on this road during Trump's first term, she said.

"There were a couple of bumps in the road, and this was mainly when President Trump would tweet about the Indian tariffs. He really wanted American companies to have more access to the Indian market. He would often, before a meeting, tweet out something. It was almost a negotiating tactic, I think, that he was doing. He did this with many countries. That did cause some irritation in the relationship. But I don't think these tweeting incidents about Indian tariffs overwhelmed the broader relationship," she said.

During Trump's first term (2017-2021), there was an elevation of the US-India relationship because of the importance of India and its role in dealing with challenges from China ***PHOTO: PTI***

"We could probably expect similar things to happen in the future as well. But I think everybody's more prepared for Trump's style and his negotiation style. His very transactional approach, trying to get a good deal for the American people," she added.

Responding to a question, Curtis said the priority this time needs to be on the security partnership between the two countries. She added, "This is an area where the interests of both sides converge. Both the United States and India have a lot of concerns when it comes to China, such as its attempts to dominate the technology market and efforts to be the hegemon in Asia. Neither India, nor the United States want that to happen. So, they have a deep mutual interest in cooperating."

"But I don't think we have realised the full potential of that kind of defence and security cooperation for various reasons. Both have major bureaucracies, their democracies, which can cause things to stall, to defense sales to stall. I think that that would be my hope, that there is a particular focus on really solidifying the defence and security relationship," she said. Curtis, however, said both countries could never enter an alliance but develop a partnership that is "short of an alliance". She hoped them to achieve a cooperation that deters China, but also prepares both countries in case of a crisis or conflict, be it in the Taiwan Strait, the South China Sea, or another flare-up on the India-China border.

She applauded Trump for picking Congressman Mike Waltz as his National Security Advisor and Senator Marco Rubio as Secretary of State, both China-hawk. She felt the second Trump term is unlikely to focus on Pakistan and one should not expect a major change on his Afghan policy.

The Trump administration will continue to try to convince India to reduce its dependence on Russian military equipment, Curtis said.

"There is a good case to be made that Russia is unlikely to be a reliable partner for India moving forward, given that it is being internationally isolated due to its illegal and unjustified invasion of Ukraine... But I don't think that the friction over India's relationship with Russia will be a primary feature of US-India relations. I think it's something that will be handled quietly, discreetly," she added.

Curtis said during Trump's first term, the US pressed India to cut oil imports from Iran due to sanctions. While India complied, it was a tough decision given its energy needs, proximity to Iran, the Iran-Pakistan dynamic, and the presence of a significant Shia population, which all influenced its stance. "The Modi government was very strong in condemning the 7 October terrorist attacks in Israel and providing support for Israel. That policy between the Trump administration and the Modi government will be very similar. That of course, will have some impact on the Modi government's relationship with Iran," she said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Japanese princess, widow of prince Mikasa dies at 101

TOKYO, 15 NOV

Japanese Princess Yuriko, the eldest member of the imperial family and widow of Prince Mikasa, has died at the age of 101 following recent health issues. Yuriko passed away on Friday at a Tokyo hospital, with early reports suggesting pneumonia as the cause. Born in 1923, she married Prince Mikasa, the younger brother of Emperor Hirohito, just months before the outbreak of World War II. Throughout her life, Yuriko raised five children, supported her husband's archaeological research, and participated in various charitable initiatives. Her death brings the Japanese imperial family down to 16 members, raising concerns about the future of succession in a system that currently permits only male heirs. —*PTI*

Tropical storm Sara pounds Honduras with heavy rain

HONDURAS, 15 NOV

Tropical Storm Sara made landfall in northern Honduras late on Thursday, with forecasters warning of torrential rains across Central America and southern Mexico. The storm struck approximately 165km west-northwest of Cabo Gracias a Dios, near the village of Brus Laguna, which has a population of about 13,000. Mexican authorities cautioned that Sara could bring "intense rains" to the Yucatan Peninsula. With winds gusting at 75 kph and moving westward at 17 kph, Sara is expected to maintain this trajectory before potentially reaching Belize. The National Hurricane Center predicts rainfall accumulations between 25 to 50cm with isolated regions possibly experiencing up to 75 cm raising concerns over the danger of flooding and landslides. The storm is set to approach the tourist hotspot of Roatan on Sunday. —*PTI*

Downing Street is sorry for Deepavali menu mistake

LONDON, 15 NOV

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer's office on Friday apologised for a "mistake" in the organisation of its Diwali reception at 10 Downing Street after some British Hindus objected to non-vegetarian food and alcohol being served at the gathering. While the statement did not make a direct reference to the menu, a spokesperson for Starmer's office said the team acknowledged the strength of feeling on the issue and assured the community that it would not be repeated in future. "The Prime Minister was pleased to welcome a range of communities celebrating Diwali to a reception in Downing Street," a Downing Street spokesperson said. —*PTI*

Colosseum to host Airbnb sponsored gladiator fights

ROME, 15 NOV

In a historic first for the ancient Colosseum, staged gladiator fights will return to the iconic arena under a USD 1.5 million sponsorship deal with Airbnb, aimed at promoting "more conscious tourism". This initiative has drawn scepticism from locals and housing activists, who voice concerns about short-term rental platforms exacerbating overtourism and the housing crisis. The deal, announced on Wednesday, funds an educational programme focused on the Colosseum's history, with eight Airbnb users and their guests selected through a lottery to participate in faux gladiator fights on 7-8 May. Although sponsored events like this have previously financed renovations, critics argue they detract from the cultural significance of the site. The Colosseum faces increasing scrutiny over its role in modern tourism. —*PTI*

Marxist-leaning Dissanayake plans to combat corruption

NPP party secures 159 out of 225 seats in the Parliament

COLOMBO, 15 NOV

Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's leftist coalition has achieved a landslide victory in snap parliamentary elections, delivering the self-described Marxist leader a powerful mandate to fight poverty and corruption in the crisis-stricken nation.

The Election Commission of Sri Lanka said on Friday that Dissanayake's National People's Power (NPP) coalition secured a two-thirds majority in parliament, winning 159 of 225 seats, a huge lead on opposition alliance Samagi Jana Balawegaya (SJB), which won 40 seats.

Dissanayake, a 55-year-old veteran politician, was elected president on 21 September with 42 percent of the vote, in a rejection of traditional political parties that have governed the island nation since independence from British rule in 1948.

Sri Lanka President Anura Kumara Dissanayake (centre) leaves after casting his vote in Colombo, Sri Lanka PHOTO: PTI

His party's victory on Friday vindicated his decision to immediately call elections and secure parliamentary backing for his plans to combat corruption and recover stolen assets, two years after a financial crash led to months-long shortages of food, fuel and essential medicines. In July, public anger about the economic crisis culminated in the storming of then-President Gotabaya Rajapaksa's compound, prompting his resignation and temporary exile.

The Rajapaksa clan's Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna party, whose cohort of brothers gave the country two presidents during a dozen years in power and had 145 seats in the outgoing legislature, was virtually wiped out in this week's vote, winning just two seats.

Upon being elected president, he had promised to renegotiate a controversial USD 2.9billion International Monetary Fund bailout secured by his predecessor, but has since maintained the country's agreement with the lender. —*Al Jazeera*

US President Joe Biden, left with PM of Peru Gustavo Adrianzen at Peru on Friday PHOTO: PTI

APEC leaders to open Lima summit as they await Trump 2.0

LIMA, 15 NOV

Representatives from 21 members representing the Pacific Rim are meeting in Peru on Friday for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, the first global summit since US President-elect Donald Trump's victory featuring several major world leaders.

Leaders and other representatives will hold closed-door discussions in the morning among themselves, and in the afternoon with members of APEC's business advisory council. The officials say Biden also will use the summits to press allies to keep up support for Ukraine as it tries to fend off Russia's invasion and persist in negotiating an end to Israel's wars in Lebanon and Gaza. Still, analysts say he will be overshadowed at APEC by Xi, who arrived on Thursday and proceeded to inaugurate a USD1.3 billion megaport that is perhaps the clearest sign of Latin America's ongoing reorientation in the region. —*PTI*

Smoke rises between buildings after an Israeli airstrike in Dahiyeh, in the southern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon, on Friday PHOTO: PTI

Israeli strikes kill at least 27 in Syria

BEIRUT, 15 NOV

An Israeli airstrike has killed at least 12 Lebanese rescue workers at a civil defence centre in Baalbek, health officials reported on Thursday. The attack occurred shortly after Israeli strikes in Damascus claimed the lives of at least 15 individuals, according to Syrian state media. Lebanese emergency responders, who are unaligned with the militant group Hezbollah, rushed to dig through the rubble searching for trapped colleagues, while the Health Ministry condemned the strike as a "barbaric attack on a Lebanese state-run health centre."

In southern Lebanon, another Israeli strike on the village of Arabsalim targeted the Health Authority Association linked to Hezbollah, resulting in six fatalities. Since the conflict escalated, Israeli military actions have intensified across Lebanon, targeting over 300 sites. The violence has resulted in at least 3,380 Palestinian deaths and over 14,400 injuries in Lebanon.

In Israel, the toll stands at 76, including 31 soldiers. —*PTI*

'MAKE AMERICA HEALTHY AGAIN'

Anti-vaccine activist RFK Jr is Health Secy

WASHINGTON DC, 15 NOV

United States President-elect Donald Trump has picked controversial politician and vaccine sceptic Robert F Kennedy Jr to be Secretary of Health and Human Services, a job he lobbied for when suspended his own election campaign and supported that of the Republican candidate. "I am thrilled to announce Robert F Kennedy Jr as the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services [HHS]," Trump wrote on Thursday on his social media platform, Truth Social. Kennedy is a contentious but not surprising appointment. He ran for president, first as a Democrat and then as an independent, before dropping out in August and endorsing Trump in exchange for a role in a future administration.

"He's going to help make America healthy again," Trump said in his victory speech on November 6. "He wants to do some things, and we're going to let him get to it." During the Covid-19 pandemic, Kennedy claimed the virus was engineered to attack Caucasians and Black people, sparing Chinese people and Ashkenazi Jews.

He also talked about suffering health effects from a worm that got into his brain, ate part of it and died. —*Al Jazeera*

US president-elect Donald Trump with Argentina's President Javier Milei in his first meeting with a foreign leader on Friday PHOTO: X

Trump vows to end Russia-Ukraine war

WASHINGTON, 15 NOV

US President-elect Donald Trump has said his administration will focus on ending the Russia-Ukraine war, as he lamented the killing of people in the conflict.

He also said his administration will also work on bringing peace to West Asia.

"We're going to work on the Middle East, and we're going to work very hard on Russia and Ukraine. It's got to stop," Trump said during a gala for the America First Policy Institute held at his Mar-a-Lago estate on Thursday.

This was his first major speech after his stunning electoral victory in the 5 November presidential elections. —*PTI*

> **Homelessness or the taxes, not that I want to s**t on California -- it just feels like this chapter in my life is done now**
>
> -Actress Eva Longoria on leaving US

North Korea tests exploding drones as Kim calls for mass production

SEOUL, 15 NOV

- Kim expressed contentment with the drones' development and stressed the importance of establishing a "serial production system" for mass production

North Korea has conducted tests of exploding drones designed to crash into targets, with leader Kim Jong Un urging for the acceleration of mass production, according to state media reports on Friday. This military demonstration coincided with joint military exercises by the United States, South Korea, and Japan, involving advanced fighter jets and a US aircraft carrier operating in nearby international waters.

The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) released images of Kim engaging with officials beside at least two different types of unmanned aerial vehicles, including models with X-shaped tails and wings reminiscent of drones showcased in August. The drones successfully flew various routes and accurately struck targets, with images indicating the destruction of a BMW sedan and outdated tank models.

Kim expressed contentment with the drones' development and stressed the importance of establishing a "serial production system" for mass production. He highlighted the low cost and versatility of drones for military purposes. While the report did not specifically mention South Korea, tensions have escalated recently, with accusations from North Korea regarding South Korean drone activities over Pyongyang. The situation is expected to be a key topic during the trilateral summit between South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, US President Joe Biden, and Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba at the APEC meetings in Peru this week. —*AP*

Shanghai, Tokyo, NY, spew most greenhouse gas

BAKU, 15 NOV

Cities in Asia and the United States emit the most heat-trapping gas that feeds climate change, with Shanghai the most polluting, according to new data that combines observations and artificial intelligence.

Seven states or provinces spew more than 1 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases, all of them in China, except Texas, which ranks sixth, according to new data from an organisation co-founded by former US Vice President Al Gore and released Friday at the United Nations climate talks in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Using satellite and ground observations, supplemented by artificial intelligence to fill in gaps, Climate Trace sought to quantify heat-trapping carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, as well as other traditional air pollutants worldwide, including for the first time in more than 9,000 urban areas.

Earth's total carbon dioxide and methane pollution grew 0.7per cent to 61.2 billion metric tons with the short-lived but extra potent methane rising 0.2per cent. China, India, Iran, Indonesia and Russia had the biggest increases in emissions from 2022 to 2023, while Venezuela, Japan, Germany, the UK and us had the biggest decreases in pollution. —*PTI*

FIRE BREAKS OUT AT SPANISH NURSING HOME, 10 DEAD

MADRID, 15 NOV

At least 10 people died in a blaze at a nursing home in Zaragoza, Spain, before firefighters managed to extinguish it, local authorities reported on Friday. Authorities were alerted of the blaze early Friday morning in Villa Franca de Ebro, about 30 minutes from the northeastern city.

Jorge Azcon, head of the regional government of Aragon said on X that all government events in the region were cancelled for the day. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez also expressed his shock over the fire and deaths. The fire took place just weeks after devastating flash floods in Valencia killed more than 200 people and destroyed thousands of homes. —*PTI*

'THREATENS RACIAL DISCORD'

N Zealand people protest against contentious bill

WELLINGTON, 15 NOV

Thousands of people have joined a nine-day march towards New Zealand's capital over a contentious bill redefining the country's founding agreement between the British and the Indigenous Maori people.

New Zealand police reported that about 10,000 people marched through the town of Rotorua in protest against the Treaty Principles Bill on Friday, greeted by hundreds waving the Maori flag as they headed south to the capital, Wellington, some 450km away.

The march – or hikoi in the Maori language – is expected to reach Wellington on Tuesday, with participants staging rallies on their passage through towns and cities across the country after the bill passed its first parliamentary reading on Thursday.

The measure overhauls the 184-year-old Treaty of Waitangi, a document granting Maori tribes broad rights to retain their lands and protect their interests in return for ceding governance to the British. The document still guides legislation and policy today.

New Zealand's youngest MP Hana-Rawhiti Karearikiki Maipi-Clarke tears a copy of the bill PHOTO: X

The ACT New Zealand party, a junior partner in the governing centre-right coalition government, last week unveiled the bill, which it had promised during last year's election, arguing that those rights should also apply to non-Indigenous citizens.

The Maori people and their supporters say the bill threatens racial discord and undermines the rights of the country's Indigenous people, who make up about 20 percent of its 5.3-million population.

As parliamentarians voted on the bill on Thursday, 22-year-old legislator Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke, from the Te Pati Maori party, ripped up a copy of the bill and led her colleagues in a traditional haka dance.

Parliament was briefly suspended as people in the gallery joined in, their shouting drowning out debate in the chamber. —*Al Jazeera*

The news has since spread among the 'Woman, Life, Freedom' protest groups and female students, sparking fear and defiance PHOTO: X

IRAN'S HIJAB REMOVAL CLINIC SPARKS ROW

TEHRAN, 15 NOV

The Iranian state has said that it plans to open a treatment clinic for women who defy the mandatory hijab laws that require women to cover their heads in public.

The opening of a "hijab removal treatment clinic" was announced by Mehri Talebi Darestani, the head of the Women and Family Department of the Tehran Headquarters for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. Iranian human rights lawyer Hossein Raeesi said that the idea of a clinic to treat women who did not comply with hijab laws is "neither Islamic and nor is it aligned with Iranian law". He also said it was alarming that the statement came from the Women and Family Department of the Tehran Headquarters for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, which falls under the direct authority of the supreme leader, Ali Khamenei.

The news has since spread among the "Woman, Life, Freedom" protest groups and female students, sparking fear and defiance. —*Guardian*

'Focus on manufacturing boosted exports'

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

The industry's focus on quality products and sustainable manufacturing practices is helping to increase India's ready-made garment exports, which rose by 35 per cent in October, AEPC said on Friday. Apparel Export Promotion Council (AEPC) Chairman Sudhir Sekhri also said that exports to countries with which India has a free trade agreement (FTA), such as Korea, Japan and Australia, are helping to increase its share of exports. Ready-made garment exports increased by 35 per cent year-on-year to USD 1.22 billion in the last month. During April-October this fiscal, the shipment grew by 11.6 per cent to USD 8.73 billion. Sekhri attributed this growth to the industry's emphasis on quality, sustainability and affordability, which has boosted demand from international buyers. Looking ahead, he said, India will host Bharat Tex 2025, its largest textile fair, which aims to showcase the country's growing potential.—*PTI*

ABB India gets SEBI warning for insider trading

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

ABB India on Friday said it has received a warning letter from stock markets regulator SEBI for violation of insider trading rules by two of its employees. The warning letter dated 8 November, 2024 has been received on 14 November, 2024, ABB India said in an exchange filing. "The company secretary has received administrative warning letter from Deputy General Manager SEBI for violation of SEBI (Prohibition of Insider Trading) Regulations, 2015 by two designated people of the company," it said. ABB is a global technology leader in electrification and automation.—*PTI*

SECI invites bids for 400 MWp solar module

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

State-owned SECI has invited bids for manufacturing and supply of 400 mega watt peak (MWp) of solar modules with cells. The tender also includes testing, packing and transportation of domestically manufactured solar PV modules with cells, SECI said in a notice dated 14 November. The last date to submit online bids is December 12 till 2 pm, SECI said. The opening of techno-commercial bids has been scheduled for same day at 4pm. A pre-bid meeting has been scheduled on 20 November. Solar Energy Corporation of India Limited (SECI) is a nodal agency of the central government for auctioning renewable energy projects in India. —*PTI*

Centre urges states to fill 663 posts in consumer forums

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

3 The Union government on Friday directed states to accelerate the appointment process for 663 vacant positions across state and district consumer commissions, expressing concern over mounting vacancies that threaten to undermine consumer rights protection. Consumer Affairs Secretary Nidhi Khare, who reviewed the situation with state government officials, expressed "deep concern" about increasing vacancies in consumer commissions compared to previous years. According to official data, 18 posts of President and 56 posts of members are lying vacant in state commissions as of October 2024.At district level, 162 posts of President and 427 posts of members are vacant across the country, the consumer affairs ministry said in a statement. The secretary urged state representatives to prioritize these appointments, emphasizing that effective functioning of consumer commissions is vital for protecting consumer rights. —*PTI*

Indian economy in sweet spot: Moody's predicts 7.2% growth

It says inflation may prompt RBI to retain tight monetary policy

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

Moody's Ratings on Friday forecast a 7.2 per cent GDP growth for India in 2024, saying the Indian economy is in a sweet spot, but inflation risks may prompt RBI to retain a relatively tight monetary policy this year.

Moody's said that despite the near-term uptick, retail inflation should moderate toward the Reserve Bank's target in the coming months as food prices ease amid higher sowing and adequate food grain buffer stocks.

The retail inflation scaled to a 14-month high of 6.21, breaching RBI's upper tolerance limit, on a sharp jump in vegetable prices.

The agency said sporadic food price pressures continue to inject volatility in the disinflation trajectory.

"Potential risks to inflation from heightened geopolitical tensions and extreme weather events underscore the RBI's cautious approach to policy easing," Moody's said.

Moody's said that despite the near-term uptick, retail inflation should moderate toward the Reserve Bank's target in the coming months **PHOTO: X**

The RBI's interest rate-setting monetary policy committee is scheduled to meet next month, and with inflation ruling high, it is unlikely that the RBI would cut benchmark interest rates.

In its Global Macro Outlook 2025-26, the US-based rating agency said household consumption is poised to grow, fuelled by increased spending during the ongoing festive season and a sustained pickup in rural demand.

Additionally, rising capacity utilization, upbeat business sentiment and the government's continued thrust on infrastructure spending should support private investment.

India's real GDP expanded 6.7 per cent year-over-year in the second quarter of 2024, driven by a revival in household consumption, robust investment and strong manufacturing activity. There are indications of a steady economic momentum in the July-September quarter as well.

Sound economic fundamentals, including healthy corporate and bank balance sheets, a stronger external position, and ample foreign exchange reserves also bode well for the growth outlook, it added.

The global economy, Moody's said, has shown remarkable resilience in bouncing back from supply chain disruptions during the pandemic, an energy and food crisis after the Russia-Ukraine war began, high inflation and consequent monetary policy tightening. Moody's said trade tensions and geopolitical stresses, particularly between the US and China, are primary risks to the global macroeconomic outlook.Potential long-term geoeconomic fragmentation could complicate global trade and financial connectedness. —*PTI*

SBI seeks $1.25B in India's largest bank loan of 2024

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

State Bank of India, India's largest public sector bank, is planning to raise up to $1.25 billion, marking the biggest dollar-denominated loan in the country's financial sector

The loan is being raised for general corporate purposes through its branch at the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City

The bank is looking for a five-year loan, which is being arranged by CTBC Bank, HSBC Holdings and Taipei Fubon Bank with an interest margin of 92.5 basis points at the risk-free Secured Overnight Financing Rate, reported Bloomberg on Friday.

However, SBI has not yet given any official confirmation on the loan.

State Bank of India is joining a growing list of local borrowers in raising foreign currency debt this year, with non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), or "shadow banks," leading the charge due to stricter domestic regulations.

PHOTO: PTI

Recently, Cholamandalam Investment & Finance Co has sought to raise a $300 million syndicated term facility, the report said. Even the Sydney branch of Union Bank of India is seeking $125 million ($81 million) for a three-year term, whereas Bank of Baroda is borrowing $750 million.

The report said that despite these loans, India's dollar loan volume has declined 27 per cent to $14.2 billion this year due to the absence of large company loans. —*PTI*

WEAK Q2 EARNINGS

Markets tank over 10% from record highs amid FII exodus

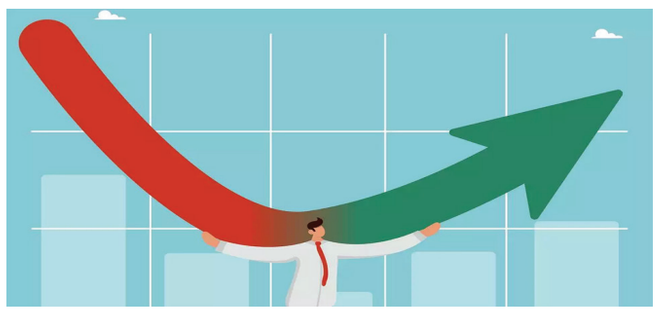
NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty after smashing many record peaks this year, slipped into a correction mode, with the NSE key gauge falling over 10 per cent from its record high hit in September amid concerns of foreign investors fleeing the domestic market, weak Q2 earnings and stretched valuations.

The BSE benchmark Sensex hit its record peak of 85,978.25 on 27 September this year, and the NSE Nifty also reached a lifetime high of 26,277.35 on the same day.

However, markets came under bear attack from October onwards. The BSE benchmark gauge is down a massive 8,397.94 points or 9.76 per cent from its all-time high, and the Nifty has also lost 2,744.65 points or 10.44 per cent from the record.

Foreign investors pulled out a massive Rs 94,000 crore (around USD 11.2 billion) from the Indian stock market in October, making it the worst-ever month in terms of outflows, triggered by the elevated valuation of domestic equities and attractive valuations of Chinese stocks.



Sensex hit its record peak of 85,978.25 on 27 September and the Nifty also reached a lifetime high of 26,277.35 on the same day **PHOTO: PTI**

The outflow came after a nine-month high investment of Rs 57,724 crore in September this year.

The biggest disappointments this quarter came from FMCG stocks, where expectations of strong earnings driven by rural recovery and a favourable monsoon were unmet, Meena said.

In October alone, the BSE benchmark slumped 4,910.72 points or 5.82 per cent, and the Nifty tumbled 1,605.5 points or 6.22 per cent. —*PTI*

Rupee to remain under pressure in FY25, says Bank of Baroda

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

India's current account deficit (CAD) will remain within a manageable range for both FY25 and FY26, largely due to muted oil prices that are expected to support the country's external financial position, projected a recent report by Bank of Baroda.

Additionally, the Indian rupee has faced pressure recently, mainly due to external factors such as a stronger U.S. dollar and capital outflows from emerging markets, which have impacted INR's stability.

The report expects India's CAD to stay around 1.2 per cent-1.5 per cent of GDP in FY25--a manageable level for the economy

Despite global market volatility, the report stated that steady oil prices at current levels are a favourable factor for India's import bill, helping to balance its trade dynamics.

The report expects India's CAD to stay around 1.2 per cent-1.5 per cent of GDP **PHOTO: PTI**

While India's import costs could still be impacted by higher commodity prices, the report expects this increase to be modest. It pointed out that oil prices are a positive factor for the country. However, India's merchandise trade deficit, which rose to a 13-month high of USD 27.1 billion in October 2024, poses some challenges.

This widening was driven by increased imports of oil and gold, although export growth also showed strength, rising by 17.3 per cent in October, primarily due to non-oil exports.

For the fiscal year to date in FY25, the trade deficit has trended higher than in the previous year, partly due to corrections in global commodity prices. —*ANI*

SEBI barred Anil Ambani from the securities market **PHOTO:X**

Fund diversion: SEBI slaps ₹26 cr notice on Reliance

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

Capital markets regulator SEBI has asked Reliance Big Entertainment to pay Rs 26 crore in fines for failing to clear penalties imposed by the regulator in a case pertaining to illegal diversion of funds.

The regulator also warned that assets, including bank accounts, of Reliance Big Entertainment Pvt Ltd (now known as Rbep Entertainment Pvt Ltd) will be attached if they fail to make the payment within 15 days of the notice issued on Thursday. The notice was issued after the entity (Reliance Big Entertainment) failed to pay the Rs 25 crore fine imposed by the regulator in August this year. In the demand notice, Sebi directed the entity to pay Rs 26 crore, including interest and recovery costs within 15 days. In August, the markets watchdog barred Anil Ambani and 24 others from the securities market for five years on charges of diversion of funds from RHFL. Additionally, Sebi has imposed a penalty of Rs 25 crore on Ambani and restrained him from serving as a director or Key Managerial Personnel in any listed company entity for five years. —*PTI*

DESPITE FALL IN MARKET MFs, MARK RECORD IN OCT

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

Despite a significant decline in the Indian stock markets in October 2024, investors maintained strong interest in equity linked schemes like mutual funds, particularly through systematic investment plans (SIPs).

As per a report by Motilal Oswal, inflows into mutual funds, SIPs reached a record Rs 253.2 billion for the month, marking an increase of 3.3 per cent compared to the previous month and a significant 49.6 per cent jump from October 2023.

This growth shows the sustained confidence of retail investors in long-term disciplined investments despite short-term market fluctuations.

The report said "Investors continued to park their money in mutual funds, with inflows into systematic investment

Passenger vehicle retail increased by 7 per cent **PHOTO:X**

Automobile sales grow 12% to 42.88L units: FADA

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

Automobile retail sales in India rose 12 per cent year-on-year to 42,88,248 units in the 42-day-long festive period this year, dealer's body FADA said on Friday.

The overall automotive registrations in the festive period of the last year stood at 38,37,040 units.

Passenger vehicle retail increased by 7 per cent to 6,03,009 units in the festive period this year against 5,63,059 units in the same period last year. Passenger vehicles bounced back after a lull, spurred by pent-up demand and unprecedented discounts available in the market, FADA president CS Vigneshwar said. Vigneshwar said. "While we celebrate these achievements, we acknowledge that we could have fully met or even exceeded our targets of 45 lakh units if not for the unseasonal heavy rains in South India, especially in Bengaluru and Tamil Nadu, and the Cyclone Dana that affected Odisha." Passenger vehicle stock levels will reduce further. However, FADA advises caution as the complete picture will emerge by month-end, Vigneshwar said. —*PTI*

INDIA MOBILITY OPPORTUNITY MASSIVE: UBER

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

India is among the largest markets by volume and growing at a rapid pace, President of Uber India and South Asia Prabhjeet Singh has said, terming it an "incredibly important market" that presents a multi-decadal opportunity for the ride-hailing platform.

Singh told PTI that mobility opportunity in India is "massive" and "underpenetrated". The company believes it has "barely scratched the surface" despite the strong line-up of products and services and the robust growth.

"There is so much more to be done even though we are growing leaps and bounds," the top honcho of Uber India said.

The mobility giant will continue to bring cutting-edge innovation to the market and also take India-first innovations to the rest of the world, he emphasised. —*PTI*

Govt proposes task force to push for renewable energy

NEW DELHI, 15 NOV

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi has proposed formation of a task force in consultation with the Ministry of Power to push efforts to meet India's ambitious target of having 500 GW renewable energy capacity by 2030.

The minister for new and renewable energy has also urged industry players and stakeholders to devise strategies which would help the country meet the target in a time-bound manner.

Speaking at an event in Bhubaneswar, the minister proposed the formation of a task force, in consultation with the Ministry of Power, to align the efforts of all stakeholders towards meeting the 500 GW target, the ministry for new and renewable energy (MNRE) said in a statement on Thursday.

India has already achieved 212 GW of energy from non-fossil fuel sources and is on track to exceed the 2030 target, he said. The Minister stressed the importance of concerted, collaborative efforts among all stakeholders to overcome challenges and expedite progress in the renewable energy sector. Joshi further assured that the government will continue to support technological advancements and innovations in the clean energy sector. —*PTI*

'DEVELOPMENT REQUIRES SACRIFICE'

Narayan disappointed with 5-day work week

MUMBAI, 15 NOV

Infosys Co-founder Narayana Murthy has once again asserted that he does not believe in the concept of work-life balance. The veteran entrepreneur said he was "disappointed" with India's shift from a six-day workweek to a five-day workweek in 1986.

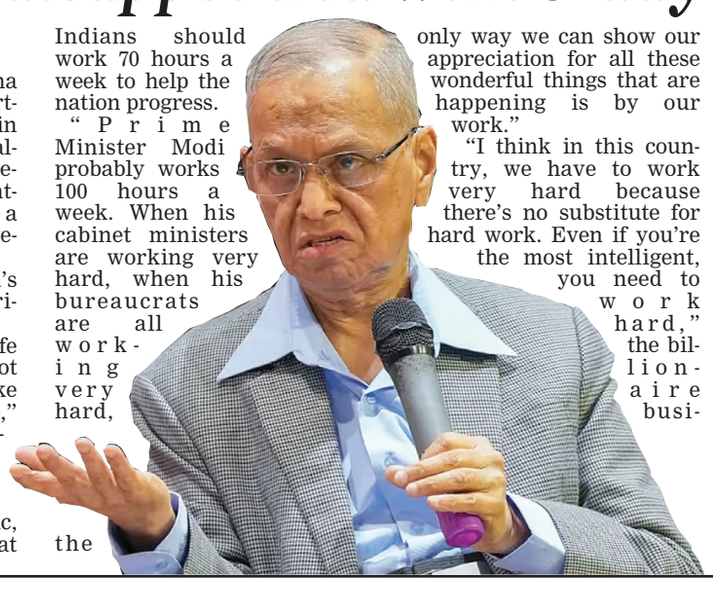
Murthy also said that India's development requires sacrifice, not relaxation.

"I don't believe in work-life balance. I am sorry, I have not changed my view. I will take this with me to my grave," Murthy said at the CNBC-TV18 Global Leadership Summit.

He further said that India needs a stronger work ethic, even suggesting earlier that Indians should work 70 hours a week to help the nation progress.

"Prime Minister Modi probably works 100 hours a week. When his cabinet ministers are working very hard, when his bureaucrats are all working very hard, the only way we can show our appreciation for all these wonderful things that are happening is by our work."

"I think in this country, we have to work very hard because there's no substitute for hard work. Even if you're the most intelligent, you need to work hard," the billionaire businessman said.



He pointed to the example of post-WWII Germany and Japan, suggesting India follow a similar path of hard work and national rebuilding. "This is what they did to rebuild their countries," Murthy noted.

Murthy said much of his career he maintained an intense schedule of 14-hour days, six and a half days a week. He would arrive at the office by 6.30 am and leave at around 8.40 pm. "I'm proud of it," he said.

In October of last year, Murthy stated that for India to compete with the fastest-growing countries like China and Japan, the youth must commit to working 70 hours a week.

— *Agencies*

Ranji Trophy: Kamboj becomes only third bowler to claim all 10 wickets

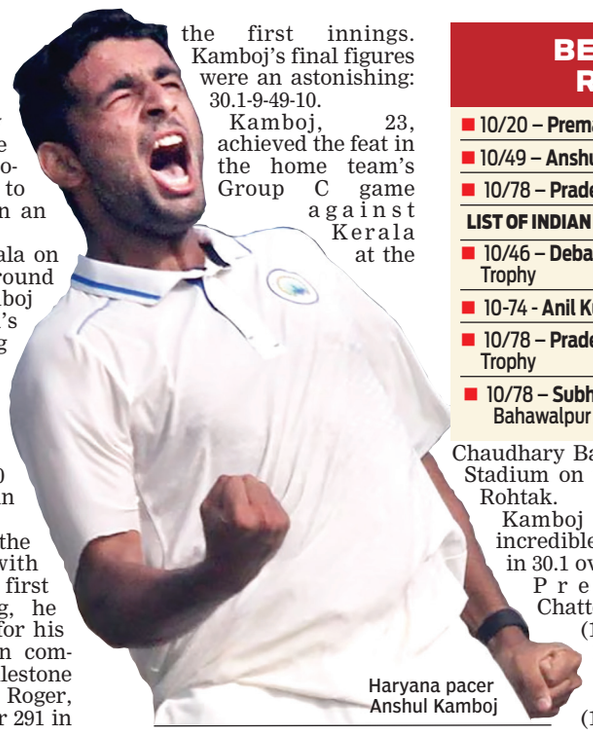
Kamboj ended with incredible figures of 10/49 in 30.1 overs

LAHLI, 15 NOV

Haryana pacer Anshul Kamboj entered the record books on Friday as he became only the third bowler in the history of Ranji Trophy to claim all 10 wickets in an innings.

Bowling against Kerala on Day 3 of their fifth-round match in Lahli, Kamboj tore through Kerala's top-order, dismissing each of the four half-centurions by tea, ultimately reaching the remarkable milestone. Along the way, he also surpassed 50 First-Class wickets in his 19th appearance.

Kamboj had closed the previous evening with eight wickets. In the first over of the morning, he bowled Basil Thampi for his ninth wicket and then completed his 10-wicket milestone by dismissing Shoun Roger, bundling Kerala out for 291 in the first innings. Kamboj's final figures were an astonishing: 30.1-9-49-10.



Haryana pacer Anshul Kamboj

Kamboj, 23, achieved the feat in the home team's Group C game against Kerala at the Chaudhary Bansi Lal Cricket Stadium on the outskirts of Rohtak.

Kamboj ended with incredible figures of 10/49 in 30.1 overs.

Premangshu Chatterjee of Bengal (10/20 vs Assam, 1956) and Pradeep Sundaram (10/78, Rajasthan v Vidarbha, 1985) of Rajasthan are the other two bowlers to have taken 10 wickets in an innings in the country's premier domestic tournament.

Overall, Kamboj is the sixth Indian bowler to grab a 10-wicket haul in First-Class cricket. The legendary Anil Kumble, Subhash Gupte, and Debashish Mohanty are the others on the list.

The pacer entered the third day's play with eight wickets to his name and claimed the wickets of Basil Thampi and Shoun Roger to complete the remarkable feat.

As a result, Kerala were all out for 291 in their first innings. While running through the Kerala batting line-up, Kamboj also went past 50 First-Class wickets in 19 matches. Kamboj, who was picked by Mumbai Indians for the 2024 IPL after an impressive domestic season, recently represented India A in the ACC Emerging Asia Cup tournament in Oman. Kamboj was among the leading wicket-takers with 17 scalps from 10 matches as Haryana went on to win the Vijay Hazare Trophy title for the first time.

This season he became only the third pacer to record an eight-wicket haul in the Duleep Trophy, behind Mohanty (10/46) and Ashok Dinda (8/123).

Kamboj has 23 wickets from 15 List-A games to his name.

—PTI

BEST BOWLING FIGURES IN RANJI TROPHY HISTORY

- 10/20 – **Premangshu Chatterjee** – Bengal v Assam (1956-57)
- 10/49 – **Anshul Kamboj** – Haryana v Kerala (2024-25)
- 10/78 – **Pradeep Sunderam** – Rajasthan v Vidarbha (1985-86)

LIST OF INDIAN BOWLERS WITH 10-WICKET HAULS IN FIRST-CLASS CRICKET

- 10/46 – **Debasis Mohanty** – East Zone v South Zone (2000-01) Duleep Trophy
- 10-74 - **Anil Kumble** – India v Pakistan (1999) - Kotla - Test match
- 10/78 – **Pradeep Sundaram** – Rajasthan v Vidarbha (1985-86) - Ranji Trophy
- 10/78 – **Subhash Gupte** – Bombay v Pakistan Combined Services and Bahawalpur XI (1954-55)

INDIA VS INDIA A PRACTICE MATCH

KL Rahul injured, Virat Kohli finds rhythm

MUMBAI, 30 OCT

In a behind-closed-doors match, India and India A squared off ahead of the start of the Border Gavaskar Trophy. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) scheduled the 3-day match starting Friday, though barred fans from attending the fixture at WACA.

On the opening day of the warm-up game, a piece of worrying news has emerged as the talismanic Virat Kohli has yet again failed to produce an upturn in his form. Even India's hero against New Zealand in the 0-3 whitewash, Rishabh Pant, was dismissed cheaply.

Earlier, KL Rahul had to leave the field due to an injury. A physio was spotted attending to the veteran batter. The full extent of his injury isn't yet known.

With the Perth Test starting on 22 November, there aren't many practice matches that the Indian team is expected to participate in in the coming days. The team would need to rely on the net sessions to boost their confidence and hope for a solid start to the long away season. Ahead of the threat that Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, and Mitchell Starc are likely to pose to Indian batters, the BCCI decided to get the team tested against India A players, who have been in the country for a few weeks now. It was Mukesh Kumar who got rid of the India star for 15 runs. *—PTI*

KL Rahul PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: X

Ajaz Patel dropped for England series

WELLINGTON, 15 NOV

Spinner Ajaz Patel, whose 11 wickets in the third Test against India this month helped New Zealand to an unprecedented clean sweep of that series, has been omitted from the Black Caps squad for the upcoming Test series against England. Patel had match figures of 11/160 as New Zealand won the third Test by 25 runs to become the first team to sweep India in a three-match Test series at home. The selectors have found no place for him in a 14-man squad named Friday for the three-Test series against England. Mitchell Santner, who took 13-157 in the second Test against India, is the only frontline spinner in the squad, though he will play only in the second and third Tests.ut of the following home series against Bangladesh.—*PTI*

Police make 2 arrests after brief fan fight

PARIS, 15 NOV

French police officers made two arrests after a brief fan fight at a Nations League soccer game between France and Israel, Paris police chief Laurent Nunez said on Friday. Stewards "immediately contained" the scuffle inside the Stade de France national stadium on Thursday night, Nunez said. "There was the start of a fight. We were extremely reactive, so the incident was very quickly contained," the police chief said, speaking to broadcaster France 2.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Gunneswaran announces retirement

BENGALURU, 15 NOV

Indian tennis player Prajnesh Gunneswaran, who once reached a career-high ATP ranking of No. 75, announced his retirement from professional tennis on Friday. The 35-year-old announced his decision via social media post with a caption, "Hanging up my racquet. Thank you." "As I write this, my heart swells with gratitude, pride, and a touch of nostalgia. Today, I stepped off the competitive tennis court for the last time.—*PTI*

Arjun stays in front on Day 3 of JO

JAIPUR, 15 NOV

Delhi-based golfer Arjun Prasad maintained his lead for the third successive day, carding a four-under 66 in the third round of the Jaipur Open 2024 here on Friday.

The 25-year-old Arjun (62-64-66), leading overnight by three shots, took his total to 18-under 192 on Friday and continued to dominate at the top, leading by a shot. Meanwhile, two-time international winner Rashid Khan (64-68-61) of Delhi, tied 12th and six shots behind the lead overnight, bounced back with a phenomenal nine-under 61, progressing to second place at 17-under 193.

Two other Delhi-based golfers, Sachin Baisoya (64) and Kshitij Naveed Kaul (65) were tied for third place at 16-under 194. Prakhar Asawa (70) of Jaipur, the only local golfer to cut, ended the penultimate round tied 38th at three-under 207.

Prasad converted a couple of putts from a range of 10 to 15 feet, scoring early birdies on the second and fifth holes.

Delhi-based golfer Arjun Prasad maintained his lead for the third successive day PHOTO: PTI

- Prasad converted a couple of putts from a range of 10 to 15 feet, scoring early birdies on the second and fifth holes.

He further went on to two more birdies on the front nine, courtesy of some brilliant wedge shots, one of which landed a foot from the pin.

However, Prasad had to slow down following two missed putts from short-range, leading to bogeys on the ninth and 13th, and managing a birdie on that stretch on the 12th.

Nevertheless, he bounced back with an unforgettable tee shot and second shot for birdie on the 17th, retaining the sole lead. *—PTI*

WOMEN'S ACT HOCKEY

Title holders India face acid test against China

RAJGIR, 15 NOV

Defending champions India will face their sternest test at the women's Asian Champions Trophy when they take on reigning Olympic silver medallists China in a blockbuster contest here on Saturday.

Both India and China are undefeated in the tournament so far, having registered three wins from as many games.

But world no. 6 China leads the points table on account of a better goal difference of 21 as against India's 18.

The top four teams after the round-robin stage will qualify for the semifinals of the six-team tournament.

In the last two outings between the two sides, at the 2023-24 FIH Pro League in February this year, China came out victorious on both occasions.

India's players celebrate a goal during a Women's Asian Champions Trophy 2024 PHOTO: PTI

So, Saturday's match provides a great opportunity for India to settle scores. But it is easier said than done as there is hardly anything to separate the two sides.

Both India and China have scored goals aplenty in the three matches so far.

While the 13-0 thrashing of Thailand has taken India's tally to 20 goals, China still leads the chart, with 22 strikes.

Against Thailand on Thursday, the Indians played a near-perfect game with all their departments clicking at the same time.

The Salima Tete-led side scored eight field goals and five from penalty corners.

—PTI

Carlsen wins Tata Steel Chess Rapid tournament

KOLKATA, 15 NOV

World No. 1 Magnus Carlsen of Norway delivered a flawless performance on the final day to clinch the title in the Open section, while India's R Praggnanandhaa finished runner-up at the Tata Steel Chess India Rapid Tournament here on Friday.

In the women's section, Russia's Aleksandra Goryachkina maintained her consistent form to emerge triumphant with 7.5 points at the Dhono Dhanyo Auditorium here.Carlsen, the overnight leader, defeated Germany's Vincent Keymer, who celebrated his birthday during the tournament, in the seventh round. The Norwegian followed it up with a victory against Daniil Dubov in the eighth round before concluding with a draw against Nodirbek Abdusattorov in the ninth. With an impressive total of 7.5 points out of 9, Carlsen clinched the title, finishing two points ahead of his nearest competitors. Praggnanandhaa and Wesley So finished tied on 5.5 points, but the Indian's superior tie-break score earned him the runner-up position, while So took the third spot.

Magnus Carlsen PHOTO: PTI

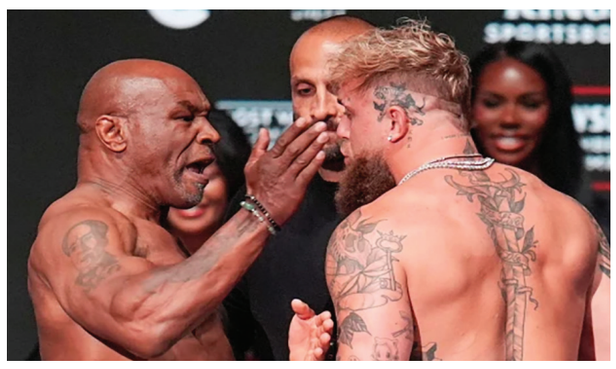
In the women's Section, Goryachkina drew against India's Koneru Humpy in the seventh round, before registering consecutive wins against Divya Deshmukh and Valentina Gunina to secure her place at the top of the podium. Georgia's Nana secured the first runner-up position with 5.5 points, while India's Agrawal delivered an inspiring performance to claim the second runner-up spot with 5 points.With the Rapid event concluding on a high note, all eyes are now on the Blitz section of the tournament, where the world's best players will vie for glory. *—PTI*

Tyson concedes the role of villain

ARLINGTON, 15 NOV

Friendship is at the heart of how a fight came together between 58-year-old former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson and much younger YouTuber-turned-boxer Jake Paul.

Friction helped build the hype for a bout that is testing the formula for how boxing is delivered to the masses, a first-ever combat sports offering from the streaming platform Netflix rather than pay-per-view or traditional cable."I think they're beloved fans of Mike Tyson," Paul said, trying to explain the boisterous boos that have greeted him when the two have appeared together in recent months to hype the event. "And I'm the new kid on the block, the disrupter, loud mouth, polarizing figure," Paul said. "And I've built my career as the heel. Naturally, people want to root against me, and that's great for the sport of boxing." Tyson's first sanctioned professional fight in almost 20 years is set for Friday night at the home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys. A crowd of at least 60,000 is expected while Netflix offers the bout at no additional cost to more than 280 million subscribers globally.

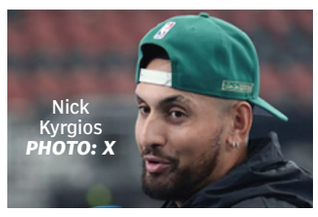


Mike Tyson, left, slaps Jake Paul PHOTO: @MIKETYSON

The 27-year-old Paul is relatively new to the sport, the one-time social media influencer bringing a 10-1 record with seven knockouts mostly against mixed martial artists and journeymen boxers.

Asked about the friendship earlier in the week, Tyson said, "There's no feeling attached." He proved it by slapping Paul as they faced off following Thursday night's weigh-in.

Tyson appeared to take offense to how Paul approached him for the faceoff but didn't bother explaining. "The talk is over," Tyson, who checked in at 228 pounds, said when one of the hosts tried to ask a question. *—PTI*



Nick Kyrgios PHOTO: X

Nick Kyrgios is set to return to tennis in Brisbane next month

BRISBANE, 15 NOV

Nick Kyrgios says he will make a return to competitive tennis at the Brisbane International beginning Dec. 29 after playing only one ATP Tour match in more than two years.

The 29-year-old Kyrgios has been mostly sidelined with career-threatening wrist and knee injuries since the 2022 U.S. Open quarterfinals.

That run came six weeks after reaching the Wimbledon final when he came closest to winning a Grand Slam singles championship before losing in four sets to Novak Djokovic. Also stating his intentions to play in the 2025 Australian Open in Melbourne. *—PTI*

CONMEBOL WC QUALIFIERS

Messi and Argentina stunned by Paraguay

DUBAI, 15 NOV

World champions Argentina suffered a 2-1 defeat to Paraguay while rivals Brazil were held to a 1-1 draw at Venezuela as South America's big guns struggled in CONMEBOL World Cup qualifying on Thursday. It started well for Lionel Scaloni's team, also reigning Copa America champions, as they grabbed an early lead through Inter Milan striker Lautaro Martinez. Enzo Fernandez lofted a lovely ball over the Paraguay defence into the path of Martinez who drove in a low finish only for his celebration to be cut short by the linesman's flag.

But a VAR review found that Martinez had been just onside and over-ruled the on-field decision giving Argentina an 11th-minute lead.

Argentina, led by Lionel Messi, suffered a defeat to Paraguay PHOTO: X/ @LEOMESSI

It was an advantage that was to last just eight minutes though as the home side spectacularly drew level.

Gustavo Velazquez whipped in a cross and Antonio Sanabria leapt in the air and fired past Emiliano Martinez with a brilliantly executed bicycle kick.

Filled with belief and roared on by the crowd in Asuncion, Paraguay battled hard in what was a scrappy encounter.

Two minutes after the interval Omar Alderete grabbed what proved to be the winner, rising at the back post to head home a cross from Inter Miami midfielder Diego Gomez.

Argentina struggled to create openings with Lionel Messi largely neutralised although the eight-times Ballon d'Or winner did provide a cross for Valentin Castellanos but the substitute could not keep his header down. *—PTI*

Slovakia beats US to advance in Billie Jean King Cup

MALAGA, 15 NOV

Ashlyn Krueger and Taylor Townsend saved six match points but ultimately lost the decisive doubles match as the United States was defeated 6-3, 3-6, 10-8 by Slovakia and was eliminated 2-1 in the first round of the Billie Jean King Cup Finals early Friday.

Krueger and Townsend lost after rallying from 9-2 down in the third set against Tereza Mihalikova and Viktoria Hruncakova in a match that ended close to 1 a.m. in Spain.

Townsend gave the U.S. the first point by defeating 17-year-old Renata Jamrichova 7-5 6-4, but Rebecca Sramkova evened the tie with a 6-2, 7-5 win over Danielle Collins in the second singles match.

PHOTO: X

Slovakia will face Australia in the quarterfinals on Sunday. Japan rallies past Romania

Japan reached the quarterfinals for the first time since 2013 after rallying to defeat Romania 2-1. Japan advanced when Eri Hozumi and Shuko Aoyama defeated Monica Niculescu and Elena Ruse 6-1, 7-5 in the deciding doubles match. *—PTI*